



REPORTING ATROCITIES

A Toolbox for Journalists Covering
Violent Conflict and Atrocities

By Peter du Toit

About the Author

Peter du Toit is a South African journalist and media trainer who has been involved in conflict sensitive reporting training for roughly twenty years. He started work in this area when his work as a journalist covering the South African transition and his academic focus on conflict enabled him to see the potential journalists have to make a constructive contribution in conflict transformation and peace-building. Since then Peter has facilitated conflict sensitive reporting workshops in more than twenty conflict affected countries, primarily in Africa and South East Asia. Peter currently heads the Conflict Sensitive Journalism Project which falls under the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership at Rhodes University in South Africa. He has completed master's degrees in higher education and conflict management and transformation.

About the Project

This toolkit was produced as part of Internews' Project on Conflict and Media during 2012-2014. Funded by a grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the project was conceived in order to develop practical tools and guidance in response to the Obama Administration's atrocity prevention initiative. The project, directed by Will Ferroggiaro, aimed to examine the role of media in inciting or mitigating violence and atrocities through four activities: 1) media monitoring in Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, and Burma to identify hate speech inciting violence; 2) production of a toolkit on Conflict Sensitive Journalism for journalists working in situations of atrocity violence; 3) production of a paper analyzing digital communications and conflict dynamics in vulnerable societies; and 4) production of a joint chapter with Freedom House on hate speech and media for a USAID toolkit on atrocity prevention.

This toolkit was written by consultant Peter du Toit; Will Ferroggiaro provided comments and edits during the drafting. It was peer reviewed by two experts in Conflict Sensitive Journalism.

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Introduction

Scholars and policy makers tracking global trends in armed conflicts share a conviction that conventional interstate wars will not provide the subject matter for local and international news coverage for the foreseeable future.¹ Instead, they argue, news media will be reporting on struggles within weak and failing states where national economies, administrative systems, and physical infrastructure are collapsing or have collapsed. Already the vast majority of armed conflicts are happening within national borders.² They are also happening across borders as armed movements seek to dominate territories that are not defined by traditional post-colonial boundaries. Armies loyal to the state clash with rebel forces; government-sponsored militias fight insurgents; armed ethnic and religious groups struggle for dominance and recognition; and criminal cartels engage in turf wars that engulf neighboring communities. Both regular and irregular forces ignore internationally accepted norms governing conventional warfare and civilians fall victim to organized plunder, systematic sexual abuse, and abduction into combat and servitude.

Too often unarmed men, women, and children are the targets of brutal unprovoked acts and journalists find themselves reporting on events so horrific that observers describe them as atrocities. These events tend to happen during periods of intense conflict and journalists will continue to be called on to cover these internal conflagrations for many years to come. International mediator and former United States assistant secretary of state for African affairs Chester Crocker writes that “the raw material for generating and sustaining violent conflict remains plentiful.”³ This raw material, he suggests, includes:

- (1) large numbers of historically “new states” with weak institutions and limited capacity to carry out basic state functions in the areas of security, inclusive and responsive governance (“delivery”), and civil administration;
- (2) the uneven pace of economic and political modernization within and between regions, as well as dramatically increased inter-societal communication flows;
- (3) the unresolved crises between militant Islamists and key western societies;
- (4) the growing capacity of criminal and terrorist networks and other non-state actors to utilize the instruments of globalization and asymmetric conflict to undermine peace and security, exploit security vacuums, and cohabit profitably between states.⁴

A foundation in journalism that is sensitive to the media’s impact on conflict can help prepare reporters to cover violent confrontations, but the ability to understand and report on the seemingly senseless cruelties witnessed in some conflicts requires a deeper understanding of how atrocities occur and can be prevented. This toolbox explores these issues and offers some suggestions.

This toolbox should provide some insights and tools for journalists reporting on events in other countries, but it has primarily been developed for journalists reporting on extremely violent conflicts

1 See for example Shultz, R.; Godson, R.; Hanlon, Q. & Ravich, S. 2011. The Sources of Instability in the Twenty-First Century: Weak States, Armed Groups, and Irregular Conflict. In *Strategic Studies Quarterly*. Available: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ssq/2011/summer/shultzgodsonhanlonravich.pdf>

2 Hoffman, F. 2007. *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies

3 Crocker, C. 2007. *Peacemaking and Mediation: Dynamics of a Changing Field*. International Peace Academy Coping with Crises Working Paper Series. Available: www.ipacademy.org

4 The potential impact of climate change on the number and intensity of conflicts is not mentioned here, but a brief Internet search indicates that this issue will contribute greatly toward escalating future conflicts.

A note on the text:

This toolbox covers a wide range of issues relating to conflict, atrocities, and conflict reporting and cannot hope to cover any of these topics in great depth. To supplement these materials, we have provided links to a range of useful resources that are freely available online. These will generally be found in boxes labelled “RR” for recommended resources.

in their own communities. It hopes to provide these journalists with insights they can draw on in making a constructive contribution to the eventual peaceful management and resolution of conflicts through their reporting. In doing so it recognizes that many professional journalists have found that an approach to conflict coverage known as conflict sensitive journalism (CSJ) (see Box One: Conflict Sensitive Journalism a Brief Background) has enhanced their ability to cover conflict. Many have also noted that the CSJ approach has raised their commitment to good journalism by helping them recognize how they can make a positive contribution toward conflict transformation in their own communities. In essence, conflict sensitive journalism involves journalists developing a more sophisticated understanding of conflict and applying this knowledge in all aspects of their reporting - from story conceptualization, to interviewing, to the final moments of production. This toolbox draws on the CSJ approach in exploring how even in the face of atrocities, journalists can effectively tell a story and thereby contribute constructively to peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Part One of this toolbox explores some of the key assumptions that underpin the overall conceptualization of the document, while Part Two focuses on key issues intended to enhance our understanding of conflict. Parts Three and Four focus on violence and atrocities. Part Five and Six focus specifically on roles journalists can play in reporting on conflicts and on their violent manifestations, while Part Seven looks at steps journalists can take to protect themselves both physically and emotionally when reporting on conflict. Part Eight offers some suggestions for editors who are responsible for supervising journalists who are reporting on conflict.

CONFLICT SENSITIVE JOURNALISM: A BRIEF BACKGROUND

In his UNESCO-sponsored curriculum for conflict sensitive reporting, Ross Howard demonstrates how, over the past 30 years, there has been a growing recognition among media support initiatives that journalists can contribute constructively in reporting on conflict.⁵ Outlining a history of the emergence of conflict sensitive reporting, Howard shows how these initiatives have shifted from a general focus on core professional journalistic attributes of accuracy, neutrality and responsibility to one that more deliberately recognizes the journalist's role in reporting on conflict. The shift, which began in the mid-1990s, came in part because of the role played by Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) in stoking and ultimately in facilitating the Rwandan genocide between July 1993 and July 1994 as well as the involvement of media in promoting ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia.⁶

During the second half of the 1990s academics, journalists, development experts and peace activists contributed toward a vibrant debate about the roles that news media can play when covering conflict. Arguably the foremost voice was that of leading peace and conflict scholar and practitioner Professor Johan Galtung who proposed that a distinction be drawn between what he terms war/violence journalism and peace/conflict journalism. He suggests that, on the one hand, war journalists see “...conflict as a battle, as a sports arena or gladiator circus... the zero-sum perspective draws on sports reporting where ‘winning is not everything, it is the only thing’” while peace journalists, on the other hand, recognize that “...in conflict there is also a clear opportunity for human progress...transforming the conflict creatively so that the opportunities take the upper hand — without violence.”⁷

Galtung's ideas were developed further in a number of influential contributions by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, most notably in the 2005 book *Peace Journalism* which emphasizes the need for journalists to understand the dynamics of conflict, warns against journalists

5 Howard, R. 2009. Conflict Sensitive Reporting: State of the Art — A Course for Journalists and Journalism Educators. Paris: Unesco. Available: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001869/186986e.pdf>

6 Ibid.

7 Galtung, J. 1998. High Road: Low Road — Charting the course for peace journalism. 7(4). http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic_journals/track2/track2_v7_n4_a4.htm

falling victim to war propaganda, and makes specific suggestions for covering conflict. Other notable contributions can be found in the work of Hannes Siebert and Melissa Baumann⁸ who were active in improving the quality of conflict coverage during the South African transition, and Robert Karl Manoff,⁹ the director of the Center for War, Peace, and the News Media at New York University. Siebert, Baumann, and Manoff have all made valuable observations about the similarities between the roles that mediators and journalists play during conflict. These observations inform Part Five of this toolbox.

However, peace journalism has not escaped criticism. The approach has been critiqued for advocating that journalists should “play a more active role in bringing about peace” and critics suggested that such a positioning could have an impact on traditional journalistic values. The concept of conflict sensitive reporting emerged as an alternative approach which, while recognizing the important role journalists can play in covering conflict, proposed that this should not deviate from the core traditional values of journalism. The essential principles of Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ) were outlined in Ross Howard’s 2003 handbook titled *Conflict Sensitive Journalism*.¹⁰ Notably, this text draws on Lynch and McGoldrick and overlaps with ideas put forward by Manoff. The approaches may differ in relation to the underlying normative principles of Peace Journalism and CSJ, but both approaches recognize the importance of journalism in mitigating conflicts’ harmful effects and both have contributed to our understanding of journalists’ roles in reporting on conflict.¹¹

An important development in the emergence of Conflict Sensitive Reporting has come in the recognition that one cannot think about conflict sensitive coverage without also considering the impact of gender on conflict and the impact of conflict on different genders. These concerns have been addressed in recent texts referred to in this toolbox, including Fiona Lloyd and Ross Howard’s 1995 book *Gender, Conflict and the Media*.¹²

It will be evident that this toolbox draws on the work of those people who have contributed to the discussion of how journalists can make a constructive contribution and that it leans toward a CSJ approach which Howard argues:

is rooted in the belief that the news media in many societies can be a powerful force to reduce the causes of conflict and to enable a conflict-stressed society to better pursue conflict resolution. The media can do this by training its journalists to better understand conflict and the media’s role in it. The journalists can strengthen their reporting to avoid stereotypes and narrow perspectives on the causes and process of conflict. The media can contribute to a wider dialogue among disparate parts of the community in conflict, through improved reporting. It can explore and provide information about opportunities for resolution. And at the same time the media must maintain its essential standards of accuracy, fairness and balance and responsible conduct.¹³

8 Siebert, H. & Baumann, M. December, 1990 Journalists as Mediators. In Rhodes Journalism Review, 42 – 46. Available: http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr_no3/mediators.pdf

9 Manoff, R.K. 1998. Telling the Truth to People at Risk: Some Introductory thoughts on Media and Conflict. <http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/pubs/manoff0798.html>

10 Howard, R. 2003. Conflict Sensitive Journalism: A handbook. IMPACS and IMS. Available: http://www.i-m-s.dk/files/publications/IMS_CSJ_Handbook.pdf

11 See Michelle Betz’s article Conflict Sensitive Journalism: Moving toward a Holistic Framework. Available: <http://www.i-m-s.dk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ims-csj-holistic-framework-2011.pdf>

12 Lloyd, F. and Ross, H. 2005. Gender, Conflict and Journalism: A handbook for South Asia. Kathmandu:UNESCO and Nepal Press Institute. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001439/143925e.pdf>

13 Howard, 2009: 12

PART ONE: Some assumptions underpinning this toolbox

News and conflict go hand-in-hand. Conflict is always about change and the impact change has on people.¹⁴ Parties agitate for change to improve their material well-being, social status or political power.¹⁵ Others resist change fearing they may lose benefits they feel entitled to or have to make compromises with regard to cultural practices, group and personal values and religious beliefs. Conflicts may also relate to how change happens, e.g., during a political transition some may favor a gradual evolution, while others demand a revolutionary re-distribution of power and resources. Conflict can also follow change. A scarcity of water during a drought can pit communities against each other for access to the resource. An increase in wealth in a community can provoke conflict if the distributions of the wealth leave people feeling unfairly treated. Conflict will often have to do with both the nature of the change and the process that is followed.

In all instances, change will impact on people's lives and this makes a conflict newsworthy. People need to know how to position themselves in relation to a changing world and the news media provide information that helps them understand, prepare for, and react to change. The need for up-to-date and accurate information increases with the levels of uncertainty people are living with and is critical during times of crisis and conflict.

In drawing on principles of conflict sensitive journalism this toolbox makes a set of assumptions about good professional standards of journalism which enable the news media to contribute constructively during times of conflict. These assumptions are that:

- Whether journalists seek to influence a conflict or not, the moment we start reporting on a conflict we become part of the event. How we behave, who we choose to speak to, what questions we ask and what we write and broadcast influences how parties behave, how others respond to us and how conflicts evolve.¹⁶ Sometimes the media's impact is limited, but on other occasions reports can shape conflicts in significant ways. Conflict sensitive journalists share a heightened awareness of this potential and this motivates us to produce quality journalism.
- Journalists can make a constructive contribution through our coverage of conflict and we can do so without compromising our professional roles as providers of fair, accurate, and responsible reporting. These principles are the building blocks of credibility without which the media's potential to play a constructive role in conflict reporting can be severely compromised.
- Journalists can contribute toward escalating conflict, interfere with peace processes, and derail negotiations through inaccurate, insensitive, and sensational reporting.¹⁷

14 Anstey, M. 2008. *Managing Conflict: Negotiating Change* (3rd edition). Cape Town: Juta

15 These goals are naturally frequently interrelated.

16 Lynch and McGoldrick describe this as a feedback loop. See Lynch, J. & McGoldrick, A. 2005. *Peace Journalism*. Stroud: Hawthorn Press.

17 There are many examples of cases where media have provoked and actively promoted conflict and violence. The role of Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) in stoking and ultimately facilitating the Rwandan genocide between July, 1993 and July, 1994, is undoubtedly the best known example. However, we would not describe the propagandist role played by these media workers as journalism.

- Journalists are not mediators. Our work can facilitate communication between parties, but this is not the same as sitting down with antagonists and actively helping them reach solutions.
- Journalists avoid promoting particular solutions or backing particular parties. Instead we examine all aspects of a conflict and critically question the goals and motivations of everyone involved. We also monitor conflict processes to keep people informed about unfolding events. This includes tracking peace processes to assess whether they are regarded as fair by different groups involved.
- Journalists do not censor news in the vain hope of preventing conflicts from escalating. We recognize that there is no way to stop multiple versions of a story from spreading by word of mouth and on social media. We also recognize that accurate and comprehensive reporting can help offset the harm caused by exaggerated descriptions, twisted accounts, and rumors.
- The more we know about conflict, its causes, dynamics and the ways in which it can be managed the better equipped we can be to report on events with the understanding and sensitivity that enables us to make a constructive contribution through good journalism.

This last assumption provides the basis for the next section of this handbook that looks specifically at the causes and dynamics of conflicts. This section also explores how parties' approaches to conflict influences potential outcomes and touches briefly on a range of interventions which can help to transform conflict.

Key takeaways from Part One

- Conflict is about change and change is often a key determinant in what makes news newsworthy.
 - Whether we seek to influence a conflict or not our coverage will always have the potential to impact on whether a conflict develops positively or not.
 - Our ability to make a constructive contribution depends on the degree to which we are seen as credible by all of the parties involved.
 - We should not promote particular solutions to conflict but we can help people to make decisions by examining the strengths and weaknesses of available options.
 - We cannot censor news to avoid upsetting or angering people but we can offset some of the hazards of exaggerated rumors which promote fear and violence.
 - We can become more effective reporters of conflict and violence if we take the time to read and learn about these complex phenomena.
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PART TWO: Understanding conflict, its dynamics, and the impact of competition and collaboration on peace and stability

Conflict sensitive reporting recognizes that events are important, but also that the social processes leading to these events must be explained if people are to understand why and how a conflict is unfolding.

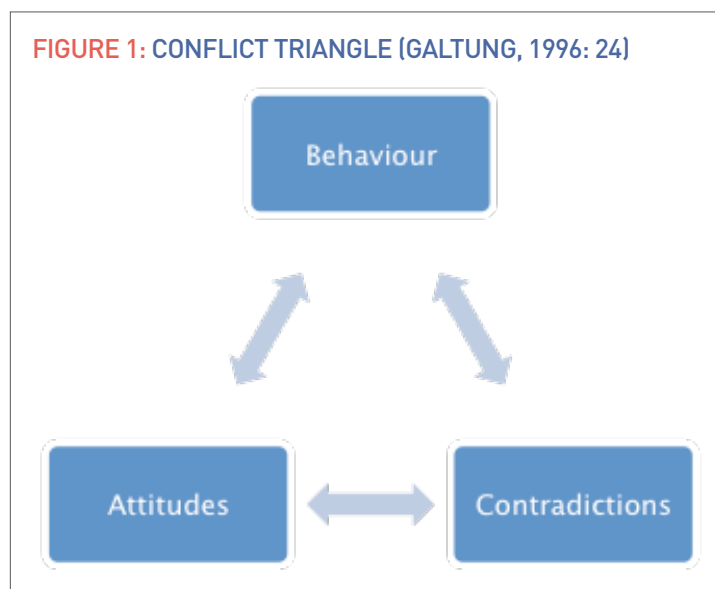
If, as we have suggested above, a great deal of journalism is about conflict, then it makes sense for us to enhance our understanding of this phenomenon. The complexity of the subject is evident when we ask the seemingly obvious question: What is conflict? It is a question more easily asked than answered. A survey of academic literature will return multiple definitions.¹⁸ Fortunately we do not need to isolate a single definition; instead we can work with the commonly held characteristics shared by many of these. Conflict exists in relationships and interactions between individuals and groups. These actors (individuals and groups) have, or at least believe they have, incompatible goals. Conflict becomes manifest or recognizable in the actors' behavior toward each other. This behavior can range from dialogue to threats and ultimately to violence. They can also include parties deliberately refusing to engage with or even recognize each other. Behavior is driven by strategic objectives as parties mobilize the power they have at their disposal to get what they want. Behavior will also be shaped by emotions such as frustration, anger, and fear, which in turn are shaped by the attitudes of the members of the different groups toward each other.

Journalists wanting to understand conflicts and to offer audiences a comprehensive narrative that details what is happening need to consider all of these factors in their coverage. We need to go beyond simply describing the conflict event — how the parties behaved toward each other. We also need

to question how prior relationships between the parties, and the broader context in which the conflict happened, have shaped their relationships. Conflict sensitive reporting recognizes that events are important, but also that the social processes leading to these events must be explained if people are to understand why and how a conflict is unfolding.

The conflict triangle (see Figure 1) developed by Johan Galtung, regarded by many as the father of peace and conflict studies and peace journalism, provides a useful conceptual

FIGURE 1: CONFLICT TRIANGLE (GALTUNG, 1996: 24)



¹⁸ Conflict consulting group via conflict present a list of 30 different definitions drawn from academic literature written over the past 50 years. These definitions, available at <http://viaconflict.com/2013/12/15/definitions-of-conflict/>, differ widely from each other.

tool for keeping track of these issues. The model shows how parties' attitudes and behaviors impact each other and how contradictions in a society, such as inequality and underdevelopment, shape both attitudes and behavior. For example, in several countries people belonging to particular ethnic groups have felt marginalized by a government dominated by people from another group. This sense of deprivation has caused resentment toward those from the ruling tribe and this has contributed toward heightened conflict during periods of instability, such as the aftermath of the 2007 elections in Kenya and to some degree in Zimbabwe in 2008. To provide a comprehensive picture of what is taking place in a conflict, journalists need to show how all of these issues — the parties' attitudes, their behaviors and the social context (contradictions) — are impacting on each other. Too often reporting focuses on behaviors without addressing the other two factors.

2.1 Sources of conflict

Drawing broadly on conflict literature, South African conflict expert Professor Mark Anstey outlines eight potential core sources of conflict which are summarized below.¹⁹ These sources can exist simultaneously and impact a conflict in different ways. Conflicts can become manifest when:

- **Resources are scarce.** Conflicts often take place when there are not enough resources to go around. These can include physical goods such as land and control over mineral and oil reserves, but they can also include employment opportunities and access to political power and the wealth that people often accrue with power.
- **Identities are threatened.** People form their identities by looking at the cultural, ideological, and religious beliefs they share with others of their group. They also define themselves in terms of who they are not and in so doing highlight the differences that exist between them and members of other groups. Conflicts can break out when groups feel that they lack the same opportunities as members of other groups or when people feel their symbols, cultures and languages are being threatened.
- **Structural imbalances exist in a society.** Structural conflicts occur when actual or a perceived inequality exists in the way a society is structured. These conflicts often take on a class, ethnic, religious, or racial dimension because these inequalities tend to follow these fault-lines in a society. Ending these conflicts can involve the transformation of a political system from one that privileges certain groups over others to one that reduces inequalities. Transformation of this type of conflict can be complex as privileged groups generally resist change.
- **Groups have competing goals.** Parties frequently find themselves in conflict because of incompatible goals. Industrialists and environmentalists clash over waste disposal methods, pastoralists and nomads clash over land utilization, and the decision by one government to dam a river may place it in conflict with another state further downstream. Importantly, the goals do not have to be incompatible; it is enough for parties to believe this is the case.
- **People lack information.** Conflict may occur if parties misread each others' goals and intentions and lack the information they need to correct their misperceptions. Acting on incorrect or too little information they may unintentionally provoke hostile responses, especially when there is a history of antagonistic relationships. For example, if Party A fears an attack by Party B and deploys troops to a border, Party B may interpret this as the prelude to an attack and respond as if Party A was the aggressor.
- **Ambiguity exists in situations and in relationships that are in transition.** Conflicts can happen during times of transition when there is ambiguity about the rules of the political game. People emerging from oppressive systems often have little experience with democracy and democratic

¹⁹ Anstey, 2008.

values. Confrontations can occur when people have different expectations about what rights and privileges a transition should have brought about. For instance, civil society groups may expect greater tolerance from the state toward questions of free speech, the right to protest and how the state security apparatus can be deployed in a more open political system. These views may not be shared by a newly invested government.

- **Tensions exist in independent relationships.** It is not uncommon for conflicts between groups to be influenced by leaders' personal antagonisms. Leaders will mobilize their supporters in pursuit of their own more selfish interests, but as conflicts escalate and more people are involved in clashes and confrontations, the conflict can become more complex as animosities between groups extend beyond the leaders' antagonisms.

These potential sources of conflict provide us with useful lenses we can use when we examine a conflict and try to identify the social, political, and economic factors at its roots. By exploring which of these factors may have led to the outbreak of a conflict, we can begin to develop theories about how conflicts began. We can then test these theories through our observations and interviews with people involved.

2.2 Anticipating how conflicts may unfold

There is a tendency to equate conflict with dramatic acts of confrontation and protest, but the vast majority of conflicts do not end in violence. Instead, people find ways of working through differences and amicably addressing conflicts. Conflict is an inevitable part of human existence and has a number of important roles to play in driving change and helping groups to become more cohesive and often more efficient.²⁰ When conflicts become overtly confrontational, they become destructive and can wreak havoc, sometimes on a massive scale.

Anstey suggests that by examining contextual factors we can often predict when a conflict is likely to become destructive.²¹ These indicators are that:

- **Parties have a history of antagonism and violence.** Past resentments, prejudices, and fears can all be reignited with the onset of a new conflict between parties causing rapid escalation. The opposite is also true. A history of solving problems without violence can moderate the harmful impact of conflict.
- **Parties do not share common values.** When groups refuse to acknowledge political, ideological and religious values that are important to others, this can lead to heightened conflict. When a group devalues another's claims to independence, citizenship, identity or economic well-being, this can cause deep resentments and exacerbate conflict.
- **Groups cannot see alternative solutions to a conflict beyond confrontation.** Conflicts escalate when people are unable to see alternatives to a violent solution.
- **There are no mediating fora they can turn to.** Groups are less likely to engage in direct confrontation if there are trusted mediating bodies available to help them explore solutions.
- **Perceptions of justice.** When groups are convinced they have a just claim to something, any attempt by another to deny the legitimacy of that claim can provoke hostility.
- **Poor communication channels.** When groups are unable to communicate openly the prospects of conflict escalating and spiraling out of control are enhanced.

Journalists can also draw on models of conflict escalation in anticipating what is likely to happen within and between parties as conflict escalates. Anstey proposes that the following dynamics can be

20 Pruit, D.; & Kim, S. 2004. *Social Conflict: Escalation, stalemate and settlement*. Boston: McGraw Hill: 9–11.

21 Anstey, 2008: 38

observed as conflicts escalate:²²

- The number of **issues and demands** increases. This can complicate the process of finding solutions as groups become less clear about both their own, and their opponent's, specific motivations.
- Groups' **investment of resources** increases as the conflict progresses. It can be more difficult for groups to extract themselves from a conflict when they know they have invested heavily in trying to secure a victory. Leaders cannot easily admit that people have suffered heavy financial and personal losses without getting anything in exchange for these losses
- There is often an **expansion in the number of participants** involved in a conflict as groups form alliances with others. As more groups get involved, so the number of issues increases.
- Groups develop increasingly **hostile perceptions of each other** as a conflict continues and costs increase. Groups become more reliant on stereotypes and prejudices as they demonize opponents and this makes it easier for them to respond violently to each other.
- **Increasingly hostile communications** make it difficult for parties to find common ground and to rebuild trust through dialogue. Broken communication channels also prevent groups from working together to find solutions that satisfy everyone.
- There is often a **shift in the internal power dynamics** within groups. Hardline leaders are often given space to entrench their positions as people turn to them for decisive leadership and physical and psychological security. Having more militaristic leaders in charge can inhibit the chance of finding solutions without confrontation.
- Groups can develop **tunnel vision** and become so caught up in promoting their own positions and interests they become incapable of considering those of other groups.
- Groups **become more cohesive, more rigid, and less tolerant** of divergent opinions among their members. Moderates can be discredited and forced to conform.
- Groups can **lose sight of their original objectives**. Objectives can shift from achieving particular objectives to the goals of defeating and punishing the opposition.

Groups can develop tunnel vision and become so caught up in promoting their own positions and interests they become incapable of considering those of other groups.

Both of the predictive tools Anstey proposed can help us to think through strategies to provide more comprehensive coverage of a conflict and how it is evolving. When we can anticipate how a conflict is likely to unfold we are better equipped to ask probing questions about groups' behaviors that shed light on the potential outcomes of a conflict. These questions may help to raise awareness about the longer term implications for groups of approaching a conflict in a particular way. We are also better equipped to think more widely about the different sources we should be speaking to about the conflict.²³ This does not mean making assumptions about the direction a conflict is taking; rather, it means exploring the range of options that might be available for the rival groups. These should include non-violent approaches.

Anstey suggests that conflict will normally follow a predictable pattern as it escalates which includes the stages noted in Figure 1 below.²⁴ People can start off trying to find solutions to problems either jointly or independently. If this fails they may then try to persuade members of the other group to make compromises. When their attempts at persuasion fail, they may turn to threats and ultimately to violence.



²² Anstey, 2008.

²³ If we can anticipate that a conflict may turn violent, we may want to find out whether the police or other state security agencies are ready to take steps to prevent violence.

²⁴ Anstey, 2008: 38.

However, where groups start in this sequence will depend on the relationship that exists between them. Groups that have much in common and a history of resolving conflict may never need to go beyond the problem-solving level. Groups with a history of clashes may find themselves resorting to threats and violence very early in the conflict.

2.3 Approaches to conflict

Conflict theorists frequently identify five different ways in which parties approach conflict.²⁵ These have been paraphrased here as:

- **Avoiding** the conflict by refusing to engage or withdrawing;
- **Giving-in** and letting the other party take what they want;
- **Defeating** the other group and taking what you want;
- Looking for a **compromise** that satisfies everyone (but still trying to come out on top);
- **Collaborating** with the other party and working together in problem solving.

There is a significant difference between the first four of these approaches and the last. While avoiding and compromising seem less destructive than giving in or defeating the other group, all four approaches view conflict in terms of “us” and “them”. Collaborative approaches involve groups working together to jointly address each other’s concerns. Figure Two provides a comparison between the different approaches.

COMPETITIVE AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICT	
Competitive approaches tend to:	Collaborative approaches tend to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ result in zero-sum or negative-sum outcomes. Zero-sum outcomes mean that one side’s gains are matched by the other’s losses. Negative-sum outcomes see everyone losing. ▪ involve groups working against each other and trying to undermine each other, rather than developing working relationships that enable them to manage future conflicts constructively. ▪ see groups getting stuck on positions rather than trying to satisfy each other’s interests and needs. ▪ see groups experiencing deep resentments and long lasting antagonisms which increase the likelihood of future conflicts flaring. ▪ end in short-term solutions with groups that have been forced to make unsatisfactory concessions remaining resentful. ▪ re-ignite conflicts, particularly if the origins of the conflict relate to questions of needs and identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ result in positive-sum gains where all feel that they have gained from the final outcome. ▪ involve groups working to jointly identify solutions that satisfy everyone’s concerns. ▪ see groups engaging in creative processes as they seek to expand the range of options. ▪ result in high levels of communication between the parties which can help them to manage existing and future conflicts more effectively ▪ result in increased levels of trust and improved relationships. ▪ provide a space for groups to develop a stronger understanding of each other’s values, fears and needs. ▪ let people jointly explore the value of seeking non-violent outcomes to conflicts.

²⁵ See for example Pruitt and Kim, 2004: 40 – 47.

It can be extremely difficult for parties that have been involved in highly escalated conflicts to work collaboratively — they will often need the help of a third party mediator or facilitator to guide the process. If groups are going to be successful in negotiating acceptable agreements, they need, at the very least, to be able to:

- establish clear channels of communication that allow them to express their needs and interests and to be confident that the concerns they are expressing are being heard;
- see each other as legitimate partners in the negotiation process and to recognize the importance of meeting the needs and interests of the other group as well as their own;
- reduce or at least manage the tensions that exist between them;
- recognize where they have had misperceptions about each other and clarify these perceptions in order to empathize with each other's frustrations and concerns;
- understand each other's fears and concerns which can help both sides explore mutually beneficial solutions to conflict;
- have some knowledge of conflict management and resolution processes so that they can manage the development of their relationships successfully;
- feel empowered to engage with each other as equals.

During our discussion on conflict sensitive journalism (see Part Five), we will see how journalists can contribute in all of these areas without any attempt to deliberately intervene.

2.4 Key takeaways

- Helping people understand conflict means exploring the relationship between the parties' attitudes to each other and their actions.
 - If we can help people to identify and understand the root causes of a conflict, we can raise awareness about what needs to happen in order for a conflict to be effectively resolved.
 - By anticipating how a conflict might develop, we can position ourselves to ask questions that raise awareness about the potentially harmful effects of allowing a conflict to escalate.
 - By identifying the ways in which parties are approaching conflicts we can pose questions that highlight the strengths and weaknesses of competitive and collaborative approaches that parties are adopting in pursuing the conflict.
-

PART THREE: Violence – the destructive side of conflict

While many conflicts never involve violence — defined here as behavior intended to physically injure others or to destroy property — when they do the outcomes can be devastating.²⁶ Violent conflict takes on many forms: hand-to-hand combat between rival communities armed with machetes, confrontations between armies deploying massively destructive firepower, and asymmetrical engagements between well-equipped regular soldiers and lightly armed insurgents are just some of its manifestations. Regardless of the form, violence will always bring a new dimension to a conflict. Some argue that violence is just another stage in the escalation of a conflict, but when conflicts cross the threshold into violence a significant range of new dynamics come into play.

Some argue that violence is just another stage in the escalation of a conflict, but when conflicts cross the threshold into violence a significant range of new dynamics come into play.

The journalist's task becomes increasingly difficult and potentially more important when conflicts become violent because the impact of violence on people re-orientates the dynamics of the conflict. When covering violent conflicts, we still need to focus on the issues separating groups, but we also need to provide coverage that reflects what is happening and how events are impacting on peoples' lives. The list of stories is potentially endless and will include reports covering civilian and combat casualties, refugees and internally displaced people, food security, collapsing health services, loss of education for children, destruction of infrastructure, and economic consequences.

Groups resort to violence for diverse but often complimentary reasons. Pruitt and Kim distinguish between *instrumental violence* and *emotional violence*.²⁷ *Instrumental violence* involves people using violence to get what they want by forcing concessions from others through threats or direct actions intended to compel others to succumb. Groups may also resort to violence without an ulterior objective. *Emotional violence* happens when people deliberately seek to harm another group for reasons such as revenge for past injuries or insults or because they are angry or frustrated with people from another group. These motives for violence will frequently overlap.²⁸ We can also distinguish between violence that may be considered proportional to the parties' objectives and atrocities. (Atrocities here being defined as violence characterized by excessive brutality and deliberate cruelty.) We will see that atrocities can also have instrumental and emotional objectives.

3.1 Recognizing when violence is likely

As conflicts escalate and the tactics employed by groups change, there will come a point where parties must decide whether they will make good on their threats to use violence or back down. The shift from non-violent conflict is often sparked by a single event, often referred to as a trigger which elevates the conflict to a crisis point.²⁹ These triggers are often small scale events which light the fuse that ignites a larger conflict. They could be as small as an altercation between youth from rival groups, a single shooting, or a more substantial event such as the premature announcement of disputed election results.

²⁶ See Pruitt & Kim, 2004: 79.

²⁷ Pruitt & Kim, 2004: 79-80.

²⁸ See Pruitt & Kim, 2004.

²⁹ See Mitchell, C.R. 1989 *The Structure of International Conflict*. Houndsmills: MacMillan Press.

As journalists, we can seldom predict what the trigger will be, but by focusing on the groups' attitudes toward each and the context within which a conflict is playing out we are frequently able to recognize when there is a danger of violence. We will always want to be extremely careful that we do not provoke violence through alarmist or sensational reporting, but we can bring attention to the fact that a situation is potentially volatile. By engaging with leaders and ordinary members of groups, independent observers and conflict specialists, we can ask questions about the level of risk and raise questions about steps that can be taken to prevent violence.

Asking these questions is part of the information gathering and storytelling process and does not suggest we are seeking to influence the path a conflict will take. These are natural questions we should be posing. Most people, and particularly those living with ongoing conflict, will want to be able to assess how secure they are and what can be done to avoid violence. In effect we will be asking the exact same questions people living with conflict want answered. When we ask leaders of conflicting groups and those with the power and capacity to intervene in conflicts these questions we can raise awareness about the responsibilities of different stakeholders (people who in one way or another are involved in the conflict even if they are not actual belligerents) in protecting civilians. For instance, in the lead up to a mass protest demonstration we can ask leaders from different sides what they are doing to ensure the event remains non-violent. By publishing these responses, we make it possible for the public to hold them accountable.

Asking these questions is part of the information gathering and storytelling process and does not suggest we are seeking to influence the path a conflict will take.

Anstey proposes the following indicators to help people to anticipate when violence is likely:³⁰

- Parties are experiencing high levels of discontent and frustration;
- One or more of the parties feels directly threatened by the demands of another or by the prospects of change;
- Parties feel that the available systems for regulating conflict are 'rigged' or unfair;
- If systems of social control, e.g. the police force, cannot be trusted;
- Parties believe violence is ideologically acceptable and legitimate given the circumstances;
- There is a track-record of violence in the relations between the parties;
- There is a breakdown of social norms as people struggle to find new ways of dealing with difference or change;
- Individuals do not see themselves as responsible within their group for preventing violence;
- There is evidence that group members have lost the ability to empathize;
- Crowd situations create a feeling of anonymity and decreased responsibility;
- Communication channels in the conflict are poor, allowing for rumours of potential attacks and violence and prompting people to misread situations.

Each of these indicators can form the basis for a series of questions that examine the prospects for violence in greater depth. These questions can provide people in positions of responsibility with information that helps them understand what it might take to prevent violence from breaking out.

Journalists can also anticipate when violence of a more extreme nature — including atrocities — may occur. We will return to this point in Section Four.

30 Anstey, 2008: 324-325

3.2 The spiral of violence

The *conflict spiral* is one of several models that have been put forward to explain how conflicts escalate and provides a useful way of understanding what happens when conflicts turn violent.³¹ This model sees the escalation taking place in an ever increasing relationship of action and reaction. One attack is likely to be met with a more violent reaction, which in turn attracts an even more violent response. By responding to attacks with the use of even heavier tactics, parties are likely to be motivated by a number of goals, including:

- Revenge — the party that was attacked may want to punish the other for the harm inflicted;
- Deterrence — by demonstrating that violence will be met with more violence, a group can hope to persuade the other group to stop their attacks;
- Prevention — by launching attacks against the others a group can aim to interfere with that group's ability to launch further attacks.

The danger with conflict spirals, in particular when they involve violence, is that they are difficult to control once they have started. Groups may fear that if they do not meet violence with violence, the others may see them as weak and this may encourage further attacks. Groups will be reluctant to make concessions because these may also be seen as rewarding the other side's aggression and may encourage further attacks. It is also common for groups to view opponents as the aggressor regardless of the fact that both groups have been involved in the escalation of hostilities. The process of attacks and counter attacks does mean groups develop increasingly hostile attitudes and perceptions toward each other.

It can be very difficult for groups to break out of a cycle like this and they can often find themselves trapped in what has come to be known as a *hurting stalemate* in which both groups are suffering, but neither is able to bring the conflict or the violence to an end. When groups get caught up in conflict cycles, they may fail to recognize the cyclic nature of what is happening to them. They may feel that they are being forced to continually defend themselves against the other group, without recognizing that the other group may be experiencing the escalation of the conflict in a similar way. As outsiders to the conflict, journalists are well positioned to recognize what is happening and to provide coverage which shows how both sides are being affected. Our coverage may help people to get a better understanding of the situation they are trapped in and help to create a space for people to begin exploring alternatives to violence.

3.3 How violence impacts groups

Just as it is useful for us to understand how *conflict* spirals work and to be able to identify when groups have been caught up in such cycles, it can also be useful for journalists to recognize what happens to *groups* as violent conflicts develop. These changes can be dramatic and can help to explain how it can sometimes appear that groups in conflict are not behaving rationally, how they become locked into conflicts, and how people can continue to brutalize each other. The following are some changes that happen within groups as conflicts persist:³²

31 This section is based on Pruitt & Kim's (2004: 96 – 98) very clear explanation of how the conflict spiral can develop.

32 These changes are broadly recognized in conflict literature and the points discussed here have been drawn from Pruitt & Kim, 2004: 101 – 120, 151-168. Their discussion is much more extensive, but the selected points provide an insight into the way in which groups can change.

Blaming others for the conflict

Groups have a tendency to put the blame for a conflict on their opponents and to downplay or ignore how their own actions may have contributed to the hostilities. This tendency to blame has the effect of elevating the levels of anger group members experience toward opposing groups and this may be accompanied with a desire to punish opponents by inflicting additional harm on them. Groups may also feel that if the other is to blame then it is the others' responsibility to make the first conciliatory gestures.

Selective information processing

Groups tend to *accept* information that supports their preconceptions and *dismiss* information that challenges their views of their opponents. The process is self-reinforcing and can be extremely destructive when groups have negative attitudes toward each other. This tendency impacts on the quality of communication between groups, because people often only hear messages that conform to their preconceptions and can misinterpret or block messages that conflict with these ideas. A conciliatory gesture from one party can often be met with disbelief or extreme suspicion by the other party which then has a negative impact on the prospects of resolving a conflict. The group making the gesture may interpret the other's rebuttal as an indication that the other wants to continue hostilities which may not be the case.

Rationalizing normally unacceptable behavior

It can be difficult for people who have been involved in violence, sometimes including murder and rape, to deal with their own actions. To live with themselves after these events, people must be able to justify their participation in actions they would not normally condone. As part of this process of rationalization, group members will often go to some lengths to convince each other they were compelled to act by the other group's hostile behavior, manipulation, and unreasonable demands. Group members who have been involved in committing acts of violence against opponents can be expected to justify their actions to each other. These justifications can become self-reinforcing and lead to increasingly violent actions.

Groups become less tolerant of dissent

The fear and anxiety that comes when a conflict enters a violent stage can cause groups to become more and more cohesive as people feel forced to rely on each other in opposing both real and perceived external threats. Under these conditions the authority of militant leaders can become entrenched and dissent within the group can become particularly difficult. Social pressure to conform increases the likelihood that people will not challenge group norms. People who might have offered alternative and often more moderate viewpoints may be silenced by fear of being labelled disloyal.

Fear of a future beyond the conflict

In many conflicts there will be people who have risen to power and prominence because of their ability to provide leadership during times dominated by violence. These people may have a vested interest in perpetuating the conflict and resisting attempts to find solutions. Similarly people who have fought in armed conflicts may be reluctant to turn over their arms. For many in long-running conflicts, peace can mean a dramatic change of status. During a conflict both male and female combatants may have an elevated status in their communities. Seen as defenders of the people, they can command respect from civilians; post-conflict, the same people can be reduced to the roles of landless, unskilled laborers desperately looking for work.

When groups experience these changes, this has a negative impact on the prospect of reducing the levels of violence and of parties ultimately being able to find peaceful solutions. Complicating the problem further is the fact that these changes within groups tend to reinforce each other. The extent of the problem is evident in these following two examples:

- It is much easier for a group to continue to place all the blame for a conflict on their opponents if they are simultaneously able to practice selective information processing and to reject any information which shows that they should also be sharing the responsibility.
- When group members reinforce each other's use of violence, this can encourage people to commit more and more violent acts to win peer approval. Such actions can continue uncontested because members of the group opposed to excessive brutality may be too fearful to speak out and to oppose such actions.

By carefully analyzing conflicts and how they have developed we can bring attention to these factors and help people to recognize what is happening to them and what might be happening to members of rival groups.

3.4 Key takeaways

- Conflicts can become exponentially more difficult to resolve when they turn violent because parties need to address the consequences of violence together with the factors that initially led to the conflict.
 - While we must report on violence and its impact on communities, we should not lose sight of the need to understand the underlying factors that caused the conflict in the first place.
 - It is often possible to predict when violence is likely even if we cannot anticipate precisely what might trigger the fighting.
 - We can encourage leaders to be accountable for violence by raising awareness about the dangers in advance and questioning how they aim to prevent confrontations.
 - Groups may be unaware of how violence is impacting on them and we can raise awareness about the harmful effects by getting conflict experts to comment on the issue.
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PART FOUR: Extreme violence and atrocities

The impact of violence on civilians and combatants is often horrific, but there are some conflicts journalists must cover where the scale of the carnage and/or the degree of cruelty is so extreme objective terms seem inadequate to describe them. Widely referred to under the umbrella term atrocities — defined as “an extremely wicked or cruel act, typically one involving violence,”³³ — these manifestations of conflict include massacres, war crimes, mass killings, the systematic use of rape, abductions, forced relocations, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Reporting on these manifestations of violence, all of which are prohibited under international law and can be described as crimes against humanity, requires a special sensitivity if our reporting is to make a constructive contribution in peacebuilding.

The dramatic nature of atrocities and the impact these events have on conflicts does mean they frequently, though not always, attract significant media attention. However, the actual probability of these events taking place is fortunately relatively low.³⁴ International relations and conflict specialist William Zartman suggests for instance that genocides are extremely rare, although mass killings do occur more frequently.³⁵ More limited atrocities do happen all too frequently during armed conflicts, but in many conflicts, even particularly violent ones, leaders often restrain fighters and prevent them from using force disproportionate to their military objectives.

This part of the toolbox explores a range of conceptual issues that can help journalists in identifying and reporting on atrocities. We begin by looking at how atrocities have been defined in international law before exploring some features of atrocities and warning signs that may signal an impending crisis. We then focus on the international norm, the Responsibility to Protect, to examine how the international community is expected to protect people against these crimes. We conclude with some brief remarks about steps that can be taken to prevent future atrocities.

4.1 What do we mean by atrocities?

As noted earlier the word “atrocities” has come to be used as an umbrella term for a range of violent actions people find especially abhorrent and which should attract universal censure. It is, however, difficult to define precisely what makes an atrocity an atrocity. In a historical study of atrocities, Beatrice Heuser identifies the following as factors we should consider when deciding how to use the term:

- The scale of the event. Were a large number of people harmed or just an isolated group? The degree of cruelty involved. Were the actions of the perpetrators particularly brutal?
- The nature of the violence. Did actions of the perpetrators result in people dying? Were people raped, mutilated, or tortured? Were they denied food or water?
- The extent to which the use of violence was proportional. Did the perpetrators inflict more suffering and harm than was needed to incapacitate or disarm the victims?
- The intention of the perpetrators. Was the goal to inflict suffering on civilians or unarmed combatants?

³³ Oxford Dictionaries online. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/atrocities>

³⁴ Reike, R.; Sharma, S. & Welsh, J. 2013. A Strategic Framework for Mass Atrocity Prevention. ACMC: 2.

³⁵ Zartman, I.W. Preventing Identity Conflicts Leading to Genocide and Mass Killings. New York: International Peace Institute, November 2010.

- The extent to which victims could defend themselves. Were they non-combatants or unarmed and defenceless soldiers? Were combatants harmed or humiliated after surrendering?³⁶

We draw on these questions in offering a rough definition for atrocities that assumes the following:

A WORKING DEFINITION OF ATROCITIES

Atrocities always involve physical violence committed against a group or groups of people who are unable to adequately defend themselves. The actions of the perpetrators normally exceed any proportionality and commonly involve acts of deliberate cruelty intended to deprive people of their human rights. Atrocities often involve killings, but can also include sexual violence, torture, and the maiming of victims.

This rough definition does not try to reflect the perpetrator's motives because these can vary significantly from one situation to the next and can include different instrumental objectives, such as taking land in an overpopulated area, and/or emotional objectives, such as revenge-seeking, which may originate from a history of violent confrontations. The definition also avoids a specific reference to the number of people affected. Atrocities frequently involve large numbers of deaths, but most would agree that the extrajudicial execution of even a few people should be considered to be an atrocity.

The expression "atrocities crime" is frequently used to describe a specific set of relatively large scale atrocities including: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. The first three of these crimes are legally defined in the 1948 Genocide Convention and in the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, while ethnic cleansing is regarded as a subset of crimes against humanity.³⁷ These crimes, committed against a substantial number of people, have been defined as follows:

- I. **Genocide:** the deliberate attempt to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, especially by systematic violence.
- II. **Crimes against Humanity:** the deliberately systematic policy of attacking civilian populations through methods such as mass murder, enslavement, torture, rape and enforced disappearances.
- III. **War Crimes:** grave breaches of the laws and customs of armed conflict (in particular, serious violations of Com. Art. 3 of the Geneva Conventions).
- IV. **Ethnic Cleansing:** a subset of crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing involves systematic attacks, including forced removal, on groups of civilians defined by their identity.³⁸

In the same way that we would never declare that someone is a murderer or a thief in our reports, we would also avoid labelling any conflict or attack in terms of these definitions. Similarly, we would also avoid describing an event as an atrocity. It is not our job to make judgements and making judgements can mean we will be viewed as siding with one or other of the parties. When this happens, our ability to make a positive contribution may be compromised when audience members sympathetic to one group come to believe we are biased and lack credibility.

Nothing, however, prevents us from reporting on how others describe events. If a national president describes an attack on a village during which women were raped and children abducted as a "crime against humanity," this critique will be newsworthy in its own right. We would expect him or her to

36 Heuser, B. 2012. Atrocities in Theory and Practice: An Introduction. In *Civil Wars*, 14(1), 2-28.

37 Breakey, H.; Francis, A.; Popovski, V.; Sampford, C.; Smith, G. & Thakur, R. Enhancing Protection Capacity: Policy Guide to the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts. Research Report. Available at: <http://www.griffith.edu.au/criminologylaw/institute-ethics-governance-law/research/responsibility-to-protect-protection-of-civilians-guide>

38 Ibid.

substantiate this claim and challenge him or her to do so if necessary. We would also provide those accused of atrocity crimes with an opportunity to respond. But this does not mean taking what anyone says on faith. They too must be able to justify why their actions would not qualify as atrocities in terms of the international laws and conventions referenced in the above definitions. Just as newsworthy are the accounts of ordinary people who have witnessed or survived the atrocities.

Having a sound understanding of how atrocity crimes are defined means we do not need to let people get away with using terms like “genocide” loosely. Instead, we can challenge people to support their statements and be careful in their use of language.

4.2 Identifying conditions under which atrocities are likely

Just as it is important for us to anticipate when conflicts are likely to turn violent when we are monitoring and reporting on conflict, it is also important to be aware of the danger of the atrocities taking place. Unfortunately, it is often impossible to differentiate between conditions that might result in violent conflict and those that can contribute toward atrocities. Sometimes the best we can do is to remain alert to the possibility.

Ruben Reike, Serena Sharma, and Jennifer Welsh draw on studies of atrocities in identifying seven risk factors that will normally exist before atrocities occur.³⁹ These risk factors include the following:

- The presence of war and armed conflict. Conditions of violent conflict create an environment for atrocities and provide people involved in fighting with additional motives for violent responses to other groups.
- Conditions of social instability and crisis create needs that people try to satisfy through violence. This can limit the state’s ability to stop the violence and meet these needs, resulting in a vicious cycle.
- The presence of an ideology that excludes people and promotes the creation of polarized groups can lead to a dehumanizing process that makes abhorrent actions possible.
- An authoritarian government that expects deference and obedience and which makes it possible for perpetrators directly involved in conflict to blame superiors for their actions.
- Leaders who are willing to manipulate the population for their own purposes.
- Conditions under which group-dynamics and the pressure to conform are so strong that they impact the inhibitions of people who would not normally take part in atrocities.
- A history of previous atrocities, which leave victims with deep grievances and both victims and perpetrators feeling threatened.

When all or several of these conditions are present in a volatile situation we need to be sensitive to the danger of atrocities occurring. The following are some questions we can consider when looking at a conflict situation to assess whether it is likely that atrocities might take place:

- **Who is the conflict between?** A study led by historian and conflict expert Hans-Henning Kortüm has shown that groups in conflict with others who share the same culture, ideology, and beliefs are more restrained during confrontations with each other than they are with people from different backgrounds.⁴⁰ Following from that, conflicts involving sub-groups challenging the legitimacy and beliefs of people from the same group are characterized by the most brutal behavior.

39 Reika, Sharma & Welsh, 2009: 6

40 See Heuser, 2012: 22

- **Have recent events made atrocities more likely?** Political crises provide a catalyst for atrocities. Crises can occur during *armed contests* such as civil wars, during *unconstitutional regime changes* such as coups, when radical governments commit to *extreme ideological transformation*, and when *governments lose control* of failed states.⁴¹ Bellamy suggests a rule of thumb for policy makers and journalists, namely that: "...the greater the instability, the bigger are the opportunities for armed groups to target large numbers of civilians and whole groups—and to hide this beneath the generalized chaos."⁴²
- **Is there a history of atrocities between the conflicting parties?** A history of past atrocities impacts conflict in multiple ways, even when these histories date back many decades. Previously marginalized groups which have risen to dominant positions of power may see a justification in the past for atrocities in the present. Similarly, past perpetrators may fear the retaliation of people they have abused in the past.
- **Are groups mobilizing against others in discriminatory ways?** The following signals identified by Bellamy are clear warnings that conditions are rife for state sanctioned atrocities:
 - Elites begin purging moderates and members of particular groups from their ranks;
 - Groups are established with the goal of vilifying members of other groups;
 - Particular groups, normally minorities, are purged from the military and other security forces and the ranks of these forces are increased by members of a dominant group;
 - People begin recruiting, arming, and training private armies and militias;
 - Human rights abuses against targeted groups go unpunished and a culture of impunity seems to have taken root;
 - People begin publishing and broadcasting hate propaganda through the use of conventional channels such as print, radio, and TV, as well as social media.⁴³
- **Will a group stand to benefit from atrocities?** Is there a reason why a group might commit mass atrocities that will outweigh potential costs and risks? Motivations might include countering serious threats, intimidating dissatisfied citizens into compliance, or changing the overall ethnic or cultural composition of a territory. Groups can sometimes engage in atrocities as a way of forcing others to acknowledge them and to take them seriously. Minor players can command enormous attention by engaging in brutal activities. Atrocities can be a means to an end, not the end itself.
- **Does a group have the means to commit mass atrocities?** There must be a sufficiently large number of people willing to engage in atrocities before these can be executed. Numerical and/or military superiority is important, but people must also be psychologically prepared to perform acts of extreme violence.
- **Will the group have the opportunity to commit mass atrocities?** Can atrocities take place unobserved and without the intervention of external forces? Few atrocities take place under the glare of television cameras and the watchful eye of impartial security forces and monitors.
- **Have security forces and militias been able to attack civilians with impunity?** Armed forces and militia can target relatively small groups of civilians as a way of testing how the world is likely to respond. If small-scale attacks fail to attract condemnation or significant repercussions potential perpetrators may be emboldened into believing they can act without interference.

These questions should not be seen as a checklist, but as ways to analyze events or ways to approach a story.

41 Bellamy, 2011: 12

42 Bellamy, 2011: 13.

43 Ibid.

It is significant to note that the majority of atrocities committed over the past twenty or thirty years have been perpetrated by people from one ethnic group against another. Ethnicity is undeniably important in conflict escalation and is often manipulated by elites pursuing conflict for their own nationalistic and/or selfish reasons. It is never, however, by itself, the cause of conflict. Closer investigation will always reveal other motivations, including the denial of needs, gross inequality in treatment, and attempts to monopolize scarce resources. There will always be differences between groups of people and to blame ethnicity for conflict is to suggest there is nothing we can do to stop conflict. We need to be particularly careful when using the phrase ethnic conflict. It is not the differences between groups that cause conflict, but how members of these groups treat and relate to each other. This point must remain at the forefront of our minds. Simply blaming ethnicity for violence and atrocities dramatically distorts the real picture and reinforces beliefs that these events are inevitable.

We need to be particularly careful when using the phrase ethnic conflict. It is not the differences between groups that cause conflict, but how members of these groups treat and relate to each other.

4.3 Atrocity prevention

Perhaps the most critical role journalists can play when atrocities are taking place, or have taken place, is to bring news of these events to the attention of the world so that people can respond. Then, having done what we can to raise awareness, we need to follow up by finding out how governments and the international community are responding to these events or what they plan to do about them. Everyone affected by violence and atrocities will want to know what, if anything, is being done to prevent atrocities from continuing.

When we follow up on these questions it can be useful to be able to refer to international laws and conventions that relate to atrocity crimes and to understand the different ways in which nations and the international community are expected to respond. There are a multitude of international principles that relate to atrocities, some of which fall under the United Nations while others have been agreed to by regional bodies such as the African Union.⁴⁴ In this toolbox we focus on the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), an international principle affirmed by the United Nations Security Council in 2006 to protect civilians and combatants against the four atrocity crimes we discussed earlier: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing (see 4.1).⁴⁵

One of the key ideas behind the Responsibility to Protect is the recognition that, while states have the right to control their own affairs, they also have a responsibility to protect the people within their borders. If states fail to protect their people through conscious neglect, deliberate discrimination, or lack of capacity, then the responsibility to protect shifts to the international community.⁴⁶ The doctrine is clear that regimes cannot hide behind the shield of sovereignty while perpetrating or permitting mass atrocities within their borders. It also provides the international community with a strong political imperative to intervene when necessary.⁴⁷

44 The African Union's Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa prohibits the displacement of populations by virtue of their social identity, religion or political opinion. This convention supports the international ban on ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

45 A UN Background Note developed for the Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations provides a useful summary of how the R2P doctrine has gained support over the years. Available at <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/pdf/Backgrounder%20R2P%202013.pdf>

46 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) Report. December, 2001. The Responsibility to Protect. International Development Research Centre. Available at: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf>.

47 See the United Nations. Nd. Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/about.shtml>

R2P rests on three pillars, namely:⁴⁸

- **Pillar One: The state's responsibility to protect.** States are responsible for protecting people living within their borders from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity regardless of whether they are citizens or not. They are also responsible for preventing people from inciting atrocity crimes.⁴⁹
- **Pillar Two: International assistance and capacity building.** The international community is committed to help states protect their populations against atrocity crimes. This pillar draws on the cooperation between UN member states, regional and sub-regional bodies, civil society, and the private sector to help states develop the necessary competencies and structures to prevent atrocities.
- **Pillar Three: Timely and decisive response.** States have a responsibility to respond collectively, decisively, and timeously when a state is failing to protection its populations from atrocity crimes. Interventions can include diplomacy, economic sanctions and the suspension of diplomatic ties. Interventions can also, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, involve the use of military force through collective action to restore peace and to protect vulnerable groups.⁵⁰ This collective action must take place under the administration of the UN Security Council. Pillar Three also emphasizes the importance of having the UN work alongside regional bodies such as the AU in responding to and preventing atrocities.

Pillar Two recognizes that the international community can influence states to protect people from atrocity crimes and can assist them in preventing such crimes when necessary. Interventions can involve helping weak states to:

- Develop systems and processes which prevent conflict from reaching the point where atrocities occur.
- Strengthen both civil society and law enforcement agencies so that they have the capacity to intervene if citizens are threatened.⁵¹

Where states are divided or face armed insurgencies from groups willing to commit atrocities, the international community can also assist by providing military assistance to protect people and help to secure the state. Under **Pillar Two**, the deployment of foreign military personnel or police for peacekeeping purposes would be with the consent of the parties. Such interventions can also involve promoting economic development to reduce potential resource-based conflicts. These interventions need to be implemented with exceptional care to prevent new conflicts from breaking out over the fair allocation of resources to different groups. They can also relate to enhancing judicial services and processes so that people have recourse to courts instead of resorting to violence.

Pillar Three interventions can include both military and non-military options. The UN has displayed a strong preference for dialogue and peaceful persuasion and these methods can include diplomatic sanctions, initiating investigations, and fact-finding missions. These approaches can often serve as a prelude to more robust interventions including Security Council-approved economic sanctions, arms embargoes, and targeted sanctions against individual leaders. Perpetrators may also be threatened with prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

48 'Report of the Secretary General Implementing the Responsibility to Protect' (United Nations General Assembly, 12 January 2009)

49 These obligations are already required by international law.

50 Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations addresses action with respect to threats to peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>

51 Stanley Foundation Policy Memo. 2013. Preventing Mass Atrocities: Resilient Societies, State Capacity, and Structural Reform. Available: <http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/resources.cfm?id=519>

While warnings and non-violent interventions are likely to precede the use of military force, the international community must, in terms of the UN Charter and R2P principles, be willing to take stronger steps when necessary. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon argues that:

When a State refuses to accept international prevention and protection assistance, commits egregious crimes and violations relating to the responsibility to protect and fails to respond to less coercive measures, it is, in effect, challenging the international community to live up to its own responsibilities.⁵²

Waxman writes that:

...coercive military measures to stop mass atrocities include a wide spectrum of activities, most fall short of invasions and direct attacks on the regime's authority. Force or threat of force may be used in cases of genocide and mass atrocities to, among other things, guard relief efforts, degrade perpetrators' capacity for repression, and signal a willingness to escalate further if necessary.⁵³

Military operations that fall short of a total invasion of a country can include the following:

- Securing/controlling transportation routes and borders;
- Reinforcing peace operations;
- Enforcing no-fly zones, safe havens, or arms embargoes;
- Jamming broadcasts and communications;
- Precision-targeted strikes; or
- Demonstrating presence of troops on the ground who are equipped and ready to take further action if necessary.

These responses must happen timeously to prevent the loss of life and the escalation of conflict in ways that will greatly complicate the process of finding solutions. It is also important for the international community, including regional organizations, to live up to commitments if R2P is to be seen as a credible doctrine that stops atrocity crimes from being committed with impunity. For these interventions to work, individual states need to be prepared to commit troops and resources to interventions and to put their own soldiers in harm's way.

One key issue confronting stakeholders wanting to play a role in atrocity prevention relates to the challenge of selecting the right methods at the right time. During the early stages of a conflict's development, it makes sense to adopt a conflict management and transformation approach that aims to bring parties together and to assist them to resolve their conflicts in a mutually satisfactory and sustainable way. This approach remains appropriate even when a conflict has become violent. However, the objectives cannot remain the same when it becomes evident atrocities are being, or are likely to be, committed.

Conflict management and resolution processes focus on treating all parties as equals and are intended to address the grievances of all involved. Such an approach is not appropriate in the face of atrocities. In these circumstances, ongoing negotiations can provide a smokescreen behind which parties continue to carry out brutal attacks on civilian populations. In the face of such events, the international community cannot continue to treat both parties equally — it will normally be all too

Conflict management and resolution processes focus on treating all parties as equals and are intended to address the grievances of all involved. Such an approach is not appropriate in the face of atrocities.

52 Report of the Secretary General Implementing the Responsibility to Protect' (United Nations General Assembly, 12 January 2009)

53 Waxman, M. October, 2009. Intervention to Stop Genocide and Mass Atrocities. Council on Foreign Relations. Council Special Report 49: 6. Available: <http://www.cfr.org/genocide/intervention-stop-genocide-mass-atrocities/p20379>

evident which party is perpetrating atrocities and which party is the victim. An even-handed approach that permits the killing of innocents to continue is clearly untenable and it is critical for stakeholders to condemn such actions and to respond in accordance with R2P commitments.⁵⁴

4.5 Preventing fresh atrocities

Atrocities committed by one group years and sometimes decades before can prepare the soil for future atrocities.

One of the most troublesome factors about atrocities is the potential they have to reproduce over time. People have long memories. Atrocities committed by one group years and sometimes decades before can prepare the soil for future atrocities. In his 2009 General Assembly report, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon suggested that, “The surest predictor of genocide is past genocide.” He proposed that successful post-trauma peacebuilding efforts can provide a critical point of intervention that can significantly reduce the prospects of future atrocities.

Zartman refers to post-crisis intervention as the earliest intervention that can be made, because, if done correctly, it can prevent conflicts and atrocities that have not even started to unfold.⁵⁵ He argues that the post-atrocity phase requires parties to make considerable efforts to rebuild both economies and political systems. During these processes, states must demonstrate a commitment to dealing fairly with all groups, including those that may have fought against them. In doing so they can begin to address fears about a future peaceful co-existence between formerly warring groups and demonstrate a willingness to address specific grievances. States can also develop political systems that ensure minority groups are able to participate in political life and decision making, thereby limiting their need to take up arms to have their concerns heard and needs addressed.⁵⁶ Such processes, however, can often require a great deal of external support because conflict torn societies can often be too weak or disorganized to manage these processes. The impact of conflict and in particular of atrocities will often make it essential to have monitors on the ground to ensure all parties are upholding the provisions of peace agreements.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (RR) 1: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES

BBC World Service Trust. Reporting Transitional Justice: A Handbook for Journalists. Edited by Julia Crawford (2007). This handbook explores the question of transitional justice in some depth, focusing on the different ways in which this challenge can be approached and the special challenges journalists face. Available at: <http://www.jurnalistik.net/wp-content/uploads/TJ-Handbook-Jan-08.pdf>

Institute for War and Peace Reporting. 2013. Transitional Justice: A handbook for Journalists, Citizens and Activists. London. Available at http://iwpr.net/sites/default/files/transitional_justice_handbook_eng_web.pdf

David Bloomfield & Teresa Barnes. (eds.) 2003. Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A handbook. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/Reconciliation-After-Violent-Conflict-A-Handbook-Full-English-PDF.pdf>

54 See Bellamy, A. 2011. Mass Atrocities and Armed Conflict: Links, Distinctions and Implications for the Responsibility to Protect. Policy Analysis Brief, The Stanley Foundation for a more detailed discussion.

55 Zartman, W. 2010. Preventing Identity Conflicts Leading to Genocide and Mass Killings. International Peace Institute: 22. Available: <http://www.ipinst.org/publication/policy-papers/detail/305-preventing-identity-conflicts-leading-to-genocide-and-mass-killings.html>

56 See Gurses, M. & Rost, N. 2013. “Sustaining the peace after ethnic wars.” Conflict Management and Peace Science, Volume 30, Issue 5, pp. 469-491 for a detailed exploration of the challenges that are faced when ending ethnic wars.

Countries that have experienced civil wars that have included atrocities will need to address the question of accommodating combatants in these conflicts. These processes of disarming combatants, demobilizing them, and reintegrating them into society are especially important in conflicts that have witnessed mass atrocities. Perpetrators of atrocity crimes will seldom simply be accepted back into society and special arrangements must be made to ensure that ex-combatants, who often include child soldiers, can rebuild their lives following a war. Failure to create a viable livelihood for these ex-combatants can leave communities with a ready pool of disgruntled and often battle-hardened veterans who can be drawn back into armed conflicts.

There is a widespread understanding that in the wake of traumatic conflicts, reconciliation and trauma healing need to go together. Such processes often involve the public acknowledgement of events to allow for both perpetrators and victims to mourn. They can also create opportunities for victims to tell their stories and share what they have been through and where perpetrators can tell the truth about what they have done. Sometimes, but not always, these processes can involve meetings between perpetrators and victims. In some instances processes can include a process of amnesty for perpetrators after confession. But they can also involve a combination of reconciliation processes between people at the grassroots level and prosecution of those responsible for ordering atrocities before national courts or the International Criminal Court.

Central to the idea of reconciliation is the recognition that parties cannot simply go about the process of settling unresolved issues and building collective futures without meaningfully acknowledging the past. Without acknowledging and addressing the hatred, anger, violence, and shame that accompanies past atrocities, communities will never have the opportunity to construct a new future together. The past will continue to serve as a latent source of future conflict.

How countries that have been through terrible conflicts address questions of transitional justice and reconciliation is too complex a topic to be addressed in this toolbox, but there are a range of useful resources journalists can access to cover these processes. Having a detailed understanding of the different options that are available to parties can also help us to ask challenging, but necessary, questions as peace processes are unfolding (**see RR 1**).

Without acknowledging and addressing the hatred, anger, violence, and shame that accompanies past atrocities, communities will never have the opportunity to construct a new future together. The past will continue to serve as a latent source of future conflict.

4.6 Key takeaways

- Most violent conflicts do not involve atrocities on a large scale, but atrocities on a smaller scale remain a common feature of many armed conflicts.
- There are a range of indicators that conditions might be ripe for the occurrence of atrocities. We can help to raise the alarm about the danger of these events taking place.
- It is not our job to make judgments about different groups' actions and we should not describe an attack as an atrocity, but we can provide audiences with detailed information so that they can reach their own conclusions.
- Understanding how different atrocity crimes are defined in international law can equip us to ask important questions when these events are taking place. These can include challenging national and international players about their failure to act when atrocities are taking place.
- Journalists have critical roles to play in covering transitional justice and reconciliation processes, and we can equip ourselves to report on these processes by reading up on what has happened in other countries.

PART FIVE: The role of reporters in mitigating and transforming conflict

Throughout this toolbox we have focused on how journalists can contribute to the peaceful management and transformation of conflict even during situations of violence and atrocities. In Part Five, we focus on specific roles journalists can play that can help opposing sides to bridge divides between them, reduce tensions, and identify and agree on mutually satisfactory solutions to conflicts. The roles, outlined below, have been identified by scholars, conflict specialists, and media professionals who have drawn on insights from the fields of peace and conflict studies and who have observed the similarities between the work of journalists and professional mediators during confrontations.⁵⁷ This toolbox draws on the insights of these authors in developing a consolidated set of eight core roles conflict sensitive journalists can play in reporting constructively on conflict.

In proposing that we can play these roles, the toolbox acknowledges that journalists and mediators are motivated by different professional goals and have different functions. Mediators deliberately try to assist parties to find acceptable solutions, while journalists tell stories that keep their audiences informed about current developments. They also operate at different levels. Mediators facilitate dialogue between leaders of opposing sides who then report back to constituencies. Good journalists engage with people at all levels in contending communities and, through their reporting, allow for direct exchanges between these groups. In many respects the constructive contribution journalists can make during conflicts is a by-product of good reporting, but an awareness of this potential enables us to approach our coverage of conflict, violence, and atrocities with greater sensitivity.

Before we examine these different roles, it is important to recognize that they can all be fulfilled at different stages of a conflict's development. Some contributions will, however, have more impact at different times. It is also important to note that journalists can play these roles without compromising the fundamental principles of fairness, accuracy, responsibility, and impartiality that provide the bedrock of conflict sensitive reporting. In fact, a core theme underpinning this toolbox is that if we do not adhere strictly to these principles, we undermine our potential to make a constructive contribution.

In the remainder of this part of the toolbox, we discuss key roles we can play that will enable us to contribute to conflict management and transformation. This list is not definitive, but it does incorporate many of the ideas that other writers have proposed.

57 Baumann, M.; & Siebert, H. Journalists Mediating Conflict. In Hieber, L. 2001. *Lifeline Media: Reaching Populations in Crises. A guide to developing media projects in conflict situations.* Media Action International. Available: http://www.unisdr.org/files/636_10303.pdf; Du Toit, P. 1992. *Human Needs Theory, Conflict and the Media.* University of Port Elizabeth. Unpublished dissertation; Lloyd, F. & Howard, R. 2005. *Gender, Conflict and Journalism: A Handbook for South East Asia.* UNESCO. Available: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001439/143925e.pdf> Manhoff, R.K. 1998. *Potential Media Roles in Conflict Prevention and Management.* In Track 2, 7(4). Available: http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic_journals/track2/track2_v7_n4_a5.htm; Howard, R. 2003. *Conflict Sensitive Reporting: A Handbook.* IMPACS and International Media Support: Available: http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic_journals/track2/track2_v7_n4_a5.htm

5.1 Facilitate communication between competing groups

Journalists often have “unparalleled access” to parties in conflict.⁵⁸ Most groups will have an interest in getting their messages across to supporters and other stakeholders and they will want to use the media to do so. Having this level of access to parties can place us in a position where we can facilitate dialogue between and within groups through our news reports and also our live and pre-recorded interviews. This role can be important during times of escalated conflict because parties are frequently unable to communicate directly with, or even to be in the same space as, members of a rival group. Through sensitive interviewing and probing we can make it possible for parties to think through the messages they want to communicate to each other and to channel these messages between parties in our newspapers, over the airwaves and online. By doing this we create space for dialogue that opens up the possibility for negotiations and the peaceful transformation of conflict.

Often the messages parties want to convey will be packed with rhetoric, insults, and threats as they seek to use the media as a tool to gain an advantage over their opponents. Conflict sensitive journalists recognize that our roles are to serve our audiences, not to provide a megaphone for any party in a propaganda war. We will report on what people have to say at public gatherings and press conferences, but we will also ask questions that encourage parties to explain their needs, values, and interests and to express their emotions and fears. We will also challenge them by reporting the facts when they exaggerate situations, lie, and try to provoke violence. Having parties firing verbal salvos and threats at each other may make for dramatic content, but it does not help our audiences (which potentially include people involved in the conflict) to gain a better understanding of the causes of a conflict, what needs to happen to ensure that violence is avoided, or to otherwise make informed choices. Communication begins when parties talk frankly about their real concerns and why these are important to them. We can play a constructive role by ensuring such messages are accurately published and broadcast.

5.2 Identify the interests beneath competing groups’ positions

It is common during times of conflict for groups to present rivals with demands they want met and to threaten to escalate the conflict if these are not satisfied.

These demands represent the publicly-declared positions that the parties take, but they conceal the deeper underlying interests and even more deeply concealed needs that parties really want addressed. Positions are often highly inflated and quite far removed from a party’s actual interests and needs. Getting parties to discuss the interests underlying their positions is often one of the first steps a mediator will take before encouraging them to search for solutions (see Figure 2). We can play a similar role in our coverage of conflict.

Baumann and Siebert suggest that:

Journalists needn’t reiterate parties’ hardened positions but rather can explore interests underlying these positions identifying common ground between parties.

If we are going to help our audiences to understand the causes behind a conflict, we need to try to get beyond the parties’ stated positions and to encourage them to talk about their needs and interests. To deepen our understanding of the underlying causes of a conflict, we will want to gain insights from the following questions:

- Why have the parties adopted the positions they have?
- What underlying needs and interests have led parties to adopt particular positions?

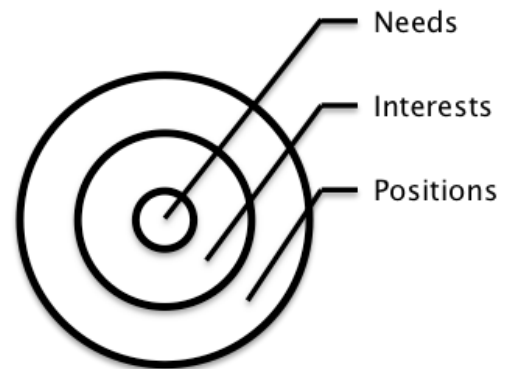
58 Baumann and Siebert, 2001.

- How would the parties prioritize these issues and why?
- What are the concerns that the parties hold in common?
- How could their concerns be addressed in a way that would satisfy everyone involved?

By accessing this information, conflict sensitive journalists can help people on different sides of a conflict to better understand the concerns of other groups and create the possibility for a more informed search for solutions. It is often the case that parties' positions are irreconcilable, but it can often be possible to find generally satisfactory ways of addressing everyone's interests.

FIGURE 2: THE CONFLICT ONION⁵⁹ — PEELING AWAY THE LAYERS

Conflict specialists often use the metaphor of the onion to describe how conflicts can be layered. Groups approaching conflict from a competitive standpoint will tend to express demands about what they want and how their opponents should behave. However, these demands are generally only positions (the visible outside layer of the onion) which conceal underlying interests (the deeper layers) which are representative of the group's real needs (the layers at the core of the onion). Often there might be a major gap between what the parties say they want — **their positions** — and what they are really after — **their interests**. These interests represent the different ways in which groups feel their needs can be addressed. It is common for groups to become completely locked into their positions and to refuse to move beyond these, even when their actual needs and interests could be addressed in other ways. This can eliminate the possibility of groups finding creative solutions to conflicts. If we are to accurately represent what a conflict is really about then we need to get beyond the stated positions and to learn about the different groups' interests and needs.



5.3 Educating parties about processes that can help them resolve conflicts

Groups can often be very unclear about the steps and processes available to them for managing conflicts without resorting to violence and coercive tactics. By drawing on our own knowledge of conflict management and transformation processes and on our contacts with specialists in the field, we can help to educate people about the range of options available to them. In doing so we can help people at all levels within a group to recognize that conflicts can be addressed without confrontation. Here are some of the ways in which we can play an educative role during times of conflict:

- We can report on successful peace processes elsewhere and by doing so demonstrate that it is possible for conflicts to be addressed non-violently. By drawing on lessons from other conflicts, we can ask leaders and group members whether similar processes could be adapted to the conflicts they are facing. We can also make reference to failed processes in other conflicts and raise awareness about the dangers of allowing conflicts to escalate without parties making a committed attempt to find solutions.
- We can provide opportunities for people with knowledge and insights in the field of conflict management and transformation to share insights with our audiences about how conflicts can be

⁵⁹ The conflict onion has been used frequently to explain the layering of positions, interests, and needs. An example of this usage can be found in Fisher, S.; Abdi, D.I.; Lusin, J; Smith, R. & Williams, S. 2000. Working with conflict: skills and strategies for action. Responding to conflict. London: Zed Books

peaceably addressed. These people could be academics, diplomats, or conflict specialists. They could also be people working for small NGOs, religious organizations, and community mediation centers who have a nuanced understanding of the concerns affecting people on the ground.

- We can also provide people with critical information about political, economic, and environmental processes that can help parties to better understand the issues confronting them. In doing so we can help people to identify systemic factors that might lead to conflict and help them to pre-empt conflicts by resolving these problems before they escalate to a destructive level.
- We can also help people to see that there may be a range of possible outcomes that could serve to satisfy needs and interests. For instance, for conflicts with an ethnic dimension, there are a range of governance systems that might address an ethnic group's fears of being excluded from political processes. These could include, among many others, a federal system, the granting of regional autonomy, power sharing arrangements, proportional representation, and political separation.⁶⁰ By introducing audiences to these different options, we can help them to recognize that there are different ways in which a group's concerns can be accommodated.

When it comes to playing an educative role in reporting on conflict, we need to be asking what it is that people need to know. We can also be guided by stakeholders and observers who are familiar with the context and who have expertise in the field of conflict management and transformation. If we are to contribute to conflict by educating others, then it is important for us to take an active interest in conflicts in different parts of the world and for us to monitor the different ways in which these conflicts are approached.

5.4 Allowing parties to develop trust in each other and in the process

A lack of trust is a vital impediment to parties being able to work collaboratively in identifying solutions during times of conflict. Journalists can contribute toward the creation of conditions that allow parties to build trust in the following ways.

- We can **ensure commitments made during negotiations are widely publicized** which can enable communities and stakeholders to hold leaders accountable for the promises they have made.
- We can **ensure our audiences are fully informed about and understand the implications of agreements** reached during negotiations. We can check on the degree to which people understand agreements by interviewing ordinary men and women about their understandings of agreements. If we find people are uninformed or misinformed, we can use this knowledge as the basis for important stories that highlight the need for better communication while simultaneously educating our audiences about the outcomes of negotiations.
- We can **publish stories about parties making progress in negotiations which can help people see that conflicts can be peacefully resolved**. By helping parties develop confidence in the process and in each other, we can reduce tensions and the likelihood of violence.
- We can **ensure that small gains are recognized**. Whenever parties begin to make progress in the search for solutions, this is news and is worth covering. For people caught up in conflict, even the smallest sign of progress can offer hope and make it possible for them to begin considering an alternative, more positive, future. We do, however, want to be careful. Peace processes are fragile. We will always want to get the news out as quickly as we can, but we do not want to derail negotiations by prematurely publishing information about discussions that are happening behind closed

⁶⁰ Ross, M. 2000. Creating the conditions for peacemaking: theories for practice in ethnic conflict resolution. In *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(6), 1002 – 1034.

doors.⁶¹ We would not want to publish or broadcast information made by one party about negotiated agreements without ascertaining whether the other party understands things in the same way.

While stories about positive developments in a conflict can help to build trust between rival groups, we do not want to exaggerate the importance of developments. For example, to say that peace is imminent when parties have only just begun to discuss the possibility of peace talks is misleading and can create false expectations that, if dashed, can cause people to lose faith in dialogue as a means of addressing conflicts.

5.5 Promote understanding between groups

Journalists can also help to promote understanding by interviewing groups about the motives behind their behavior and by questioning how groups are interpreting the actions of the other party. By asking probing questions about these issues, we can obtain information that can help groups better understand each other's actions. For example, if members of one group hear that members of a rival group are arming themselves, they may begin to prepare for battle. However, if they later learn via the media that their rivals were arming themselves because they feared an attack from a different source, this can help to alleviate tensions between these two groups.

We are also well placed to help counter some of the misperceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices that can play a significant role in exacerbating conflict. We have noted how groups tend to demonize each other during conflict and how they often come to expect the worst from each other. By producing stories that run counter to these narratives, we can challenge prevailing narratives and make it possible for people to reconsider their prejudices. In most, if not all, conflicts there are stories to be told about people whose actions defy stereotypes. For example, during the Rwandan genocide Hutus were widely condemned as killers and murderers but there were many Hutu families that risked their own lives hiding Tutsi neighbors. Telling stories like this can challenge people to reconsider prejudicial assumptions.

5.6 Increase the range of options

Conflicts are more likely to end in violence when the groups involved believe that they have no alternative solutions.⁶² We can play an important role in helping groups expand the range of options under consideration. We can play this role in a number of ways, including the following:

- From our positions as observers with an interest in the concerns of all sides, we can sometimes see potential solutions to conflicts that are not obvious to parties involved. We can contribute toward broadening the range of options available by asking experts to comment on the viability of these solutions. Similarly, we can ask parties to respond to these proposals. In both instances we can publish the responses. The objective is not to present definitive solutions but rather to encourage dialogue and to enable people to think more broadly about solutions.
- In some cases people within conflicting groups may have valuable proposals to share about the management and transformation of conflict but lack the opportunity to express these views publicly. We can provide a platform for these people to express their perspectives and to help them to inject new ideas into deliberations. Sometimes people may be afraid to make proposals that run counter to the majority view and we can provide a space for these people to express their

⁶¹ These situations can often be extremely complex. There are times when parties might leak information in the hopes of gaining an advantage at the negotiation table. Do we run with this information? Are we to be manipulated into serving the interest of one of the negotiation groups? Does not our audience have a right to know? There are no simple answers to these questions, but we do want to think about the impact of our work and how it can shape the way a conflict unfolds.

⁶² See part 2.1

opinions without revealing their identities. Lynch and McGoldrick suggest that journalists should avoid “letting parties define themselves by simply quoting their leaders’ restatements of familiar demands or positions.”⁶³ We need to recognize that people at different levels within conflict groups will have valuable and often creative contributions to share and to seek out these views. Women, in particular, often have vital contributions to make, but they are seldom encouraged to speak out. Journalists can help with this problem.

- It is often the case that people at grassroots levels in rival groups have more in common with each other than they have with elites in their own groups. Drawing attention to these commonalities can help people to see they can live together.

While we may help parties to see that there are multiple alternatives to violence, it is never our role to promote one option over another. Our role is to help parties consider a wide range of solutions and to facilitate a dialogue that enables people to make informed decisions based on a wide range of options.

5.7 Empowering weaker parties

Most conflicts are asymmetrical with weaker parties having to compete with others with greater access to financial and human resources. We can help empower weaker parties by treating everyone as having an equal right to be heard—so long as we hold each party to strict scrutiny. This may require us to be proactive. When one party has professional media relations specialists working for them, while the other has no experience of dealing with media, it would be unfair to treat them in the same way. We may need to spend more time with weaker parties finding out precisely what their concerns are and how they understand the conflict. This process can also be empowering for weaker parties. We will also want to ensure that women’s voices are heard as part of the dialogue and to ensure that they are not marginalized.

It is also common in conflicts for dominant parties to dismiss their opponents by refusing to acknowledge them. Often this involves groups dismissing opponents as thugs or bandits. By refusing to recognize or to try and understand the other group, parties can negatively impact the prospects for peace. Not only are such marginalized groups likely to behave more violently in order to get the attention they believe they need, but they are also more likely to be intransigent when negotiations eventually take place. Having dismissed other groups as criminals and insignificant players, it can also be very difficult for leaders of dominant group to do an about-turn and to start talking to these “criminals.” It is not our role to determine who should or should not be recognized. Just because a dominant group has dismissed another group does not mean journalists must accept this position. By recognizing marginalized groups, we can make it difficult for dominant groups to ignore smaller groups which in the long term may enhance the prospect of conflicts being resolved.

5.8 Monitoring human rights abuses

The mediating role that journalists can play must be extended to include a monitoring role in which we track how conflicts are emerging and report on human rights abuses of any kind. These can range from low level instances of intimidation to reports on the most horrific atrocities. In all cases our work entails two core responsibilities: firstly, we must provide detailed coverage so that people can decide how to prevent further attacks and to assist those in need, and, secondly, we must follow up on how those charged with the responsibility for preventing abuses and attacks are responding to these situations. By raising awareness about events and by tracking how authorities are responding, we can help to ensure that human rights abuses are not committed with impunity. Our roles, howev-

63 Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005.

er, do not extend to judging the actions of parties involved, but they do include providing our audiences with fair and accurate information so that they can reach their own conclusions.

5.9 Key takeaways

- We can help to facilitate communication between rival groups.
 - We increase people's understanding of each other's concerns by identifying the needs and interests that underpin competing groups' positions.
 - We can help parties overcome a history of suspicion and enable them to begin building relationships of trust.
 - We can help groups to overcome prejudices and stereotypes.
 - We can help groups to recognize alternative ways of managing and transforming conflicts that do not involve violence.
 - We can empower weaker parties and make it possible for them to engage with more powerful groups on equal footing.
 - By monitoring conflicts, we can draw attention to human rights abuses and help ensure these crimes are not committed with impunity.
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PART SIX: Practical strategies for covering violent conflicts and atrocities

A principle argument underpinning this toolbox is the idea that while conflicts may be fluid—passing through phases ranging from non-violent disputes to moments of extreme violence and atrocities—our roles as journalists remain constant. We remain committed to providing fair, accurate, inclusive, impartial, and responsible coverage, but this coverage can make different contributions at different times during the conflict. Promoting dialogue can be important when a conflict is emerging, but the monitoring role may be more critical when atrocities are being committed. Part Six focuses on contributions we can make at different stages of a conflict’s development. It looks at proactive steps we can take and makes some suggestions about contributions we can make as conflicts emerge but before they turn violent. We then address contributions journalists can make when violence and atrocities occur and how we can contribute during peace processes. In making these proposals, we recognize that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to conflict coverage and that journalists will need to adapt these ideas to their different contexts. We also recognize that journalists might face strong institutional pressures that interfere with their ability to make a difference. What will never change is the importance of getting the story right. As veteran Reuters correspondent Chris Chinaka said:

It’s one thing to make a mistake in general reporting where you can correct things the next day or even be sued for your error, but in times of severely heightened conflict getting the story wrong can have real consequences. Be clear about what you do not know and try and verify information that you have received.⁶⁴

We remain committed to providing fair, accurate, inclusive, impartial, and responsible coverage, but this coverage can make different contributions at different times during the conflict.

6.1 Proactive steps we can take to prepare ourselves for reporting on conflict

Even before any signs of a conflict become evident, there are things we can do that will help us report on conflicts in our communities if they do break out. Taking these steps can assist us whether a conflict turns violent or not.

a. Develop our knowledge of conflict, violence, and atrocities

Journalists are always busy, but it can be extremely valuable for us to make time to learn more about conflict, human rights, and questions relating to international law. When violent conflicts break out and atrocities are being committed, the relentless demands of news deadlines will leave us little time to take a crash course on these critical issues. If we are working in countries where violence and atrocities are possible, we will benefit from making the time to prepare ourselves to cover these events. This toolbox provides some thoughts on conflict, violence, and atrocities, but it does only scratch the surface. All of the recommended readings suggested in this text are available online and all of these can help us to deepen our knowledge and understanding. We may not agree with everything we read, but the process of arguing with books and manuals can help us to know where we

⁶⁴ See Du Toit, P. 2010. Conflict Sensitive Reporting: A Toolbox for Journalists. Grahamstown: Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership, Rhodes University

stand on these important issues. Sharing good readings with colleagues is also an excellent way of building up a support base for conflict sensitive journalism within our own organizations.

b. Cultivate a diverse pool of expert and community-based commentators

Many journalists have a tendency to turn to the same experts whenever they need comments and perspectives on a developing issue or an unfolding crisis. However, if we rely on the same experts every time something happens, we can miss out on valuable opportunities to expose both ourselves and our audiences to a broader range of ideas. For instance, if we are reliant on military experts every time there is a story that relates to a violent conflict, our story angles are likely to be restricted to concerns about troop deployments, weapons, and security. If we also cultivate contacts with people working in the field of conflict management and transformation, then we are also likely to produce stories that focus on how conflicts can be addressed and how parties can build and sustain peace. These can include academics, professional mediators, and conflict experts from large NGOs, but they can also include representatives from small NGOs and community level mediators who can share practical and often home-grown experiences that people in conflict can relate to. It is also common for men and women to bring different perspectives to bear when focusing on conflict and we should ensure our pool of potential commentators includes both women and men.⁶⁵

c. Build a wide-ranging community network across our coverage areas

When a security situation worsens, it can become increasingly difficult to move within the conflict arena. Even nearby villages and suburbs might be cut-off. Accessing information and verifying stories under these conditions can be challenging, dangerous, and sometimes impossible. One solution is for us to establish a network of reliable contacts across our coverage area. We should use every opportunity we have to introduce ourselves to people from all walks of life in different areas and to record their contact details. We should include men and women from different ethnic groups, professions, and social categories. These contacts do not need to be officials or formally recognized community leaders, they just need to be people who are willing to share information when events occur. When conflicts do break out and we cannot get to places, we can call these people to learn what is happening and to verify whether stories we are hearing are true. If we stay in regular contact with these people, they are also likely to make contact with us when a story breaks. Having a large network means we can ask our contacts to independently verify stories we hear from others in our network. It is naturally possible to do the same thing using email and social media if most people in the area have access to these tools.

d. Monitor media around us

In countries where media are strongly politically aligned, we can often pick up warning signals about impending conflicts and atrocities by monitoring different news media. When a news medium is calling for violence and promoting atrocities as RTML did in the lead up to and throughout the Rwandan genocide, this is news in its own right and needs to be covered. Editors and owners of such media need to be challenged on why they are allowing messages that incite violence to be published or broadcast. Vernacular stations can sometimes broadcast hate speech without interference because international observers are unable to monitor their messages. Local journalists who understand these programs can play an important monitoring role by listening to these stations and reporting on instances of hate speech.

⁶⁵ By ensuring men and women are equally represented in our selections of commentators, we can contribute toward addressing the concerns raised in UNSCR1325 which recognizes how women have been undervalued and underutilized in conflict management and transformation processes.

e. Monitoring social media

The role of social media during times of conflict has become increasingly critical in recent years and in particular since the Arab Spring as groups have recognized the critical role that social media can play in terms of sharing information, promoting propaganda, organizing demonstrations, intimidating opponents, and winning sympathy for their causes. For journalists wanting to get a sense of how an issue is developing, how a conflict may be emerging, or what is happening when armed conflicts do break out, it is vital for us to be able to monitor social media. Many journalists are already using these tools to great advantage, but if we have not mastered some of the basics, then it is important that we start learning to use these tools. We need to know how to use these tools before conflicts start emerging. There will not be time when the fighting starts and the stones or the bullets start flying. We can choose from a wide range of social media monitoring tools that are freely available online and which make it possible for us to cover multiple social networks at the same time. Many of these tools are designed to enable corporations and companies to monitor their own and their competitors' impact on social media, but they can also be used to enable us to get a good sense of the issues people are talking about and events that they may be witnessing. Many of these sites also include step-by-step guides and additional help features which make it quite possible for us to teach ourselves how to use these tools. All of these tools will be beneficial to our general work as journalists, but they will be particularly useful when conflicts erupt.

f. Learn to develop and use mapping tools

In recent years members of NGOs, media support agencies, human rights groups, and emergency response organizations have all made effective use of online crisis-mapping tools, such as the Kenyan-developed *Ushahidi* platform. These powerful tools can be used by journalists to draw on the power of crowdsourcing to create visual representations of unfolding conflicts: what is happening, where they are happening, and when they happened. These tools enable people from across crisis areas to submit information via multiple channels—including email, SMS, tweets, and voicemails—about acts of violence or about particular needs. This information can then be aggregated onto a map or a public website.

The original *Ushahidi*⁶⁶ platform was developed by a group of concerned bloggers and software developers who felt the Kenyan government was downplaying the severity of the post-election violence in 2008. In response:

Some Kenyan activists...decided to crowd source and live map the crisis reporting. They set up a website with a Google Map of Kenya coupled with a web form and an SMS number. These allowed anyone with access to the Internet and/or a mobile phone to send in eye-witness accounts of human rights abuses. In this way, the "crowd" was able to document human rights abuses that would otherwise have gone undocumented.⁶⁷

Since then the platform has been upgraded and has been used to create thousands of maps in more than 140 countries. The *Ushahidi* team has also developed a new platform, Crowdmap, which re-

RR 2: USHAHIDI AND CROWDMAP

By visiting this website, we can learn about a range of different platforms we can use for mapping conflict and establish platforms for ourselves. Available: <http://www.ushahidi.com/product/ushahidi/>

⁶⁶ Ushahidi means witness or testimony in Swahili.

⁶⁷ Internews Centre for Innovation and Learning. July 2012. Report: Mapping the maps: A Meta-Level Analysis of Ushahidi and Crowdmap. Available: http://irevolution.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/internews-wpcrowd-globe_web-1.pdf

quires less technical knowledge but which can produce similar results.⁶⁸ These maps can be used to show where incidents of violence are taking place, where people fleeing violence have relocated, and which areas are unsafe. Crowd-sourcing maps will only work if we can get people to feed us information and it is here that our networks, discussed under point C, can be critical. If we have built strong networks across our communities, we can rely on these people to report information to be represented on these maps. We can also use our media to invite people to submit information to our platforms. We will still need to verify information we receive.

Essential features of *Ushahidi*, *Crowdmap*, and similar programs are that they are free to the public and relatively easy to use. Developers generally provide easy-to-follow guides, so that we do not need to be technicians to set up the platforms. That said, we do want to have some experience working with these tools before a crisis erupts, perhaps experimenting with these tools on low-risk projects to ensure our familiarity and readiness. **(See RR 2)**

6.2 Reporting constructively on conflicts that have not turned violent

We have discussed many of the ways in which journalists can contribute toward mitigating and transforming conflict in Part Five, but we will make some specific proposals about emerging conflict in this section. It is notable that all of the contributions proposed here will remain relevant when a conflict has turned violent.

a. Frame conflicts as problems that need to be resolved

How we choose to frame conflicts can shape the way people understand them and the way in which parties elect to respond to the media. If we insist on reporting on conflicts as competitions in which there must be winners and losers, it is possible that we influence our audiences to think of them in this way. If this is the case, then every concession made by one party is likely to be seen as a victory for the other side; consequently, leaders are likely to avoid making concessions fearing that they may appear weak to their constituencies. However, if we approach conflicts as problems that need to be solved and which cannot be addressed unless everyone is at least partially satisfied, then this can help people to recognize that alternative approaches to conflict may be possible. Portrayed in this way a concession made by one party may no longer be seen as a failing, but rather as a constructive contribution made in the interests of serving the common good. How we choose to think about conflict will have an influence on every decision we make in the reporting process. It will determine who we choose to speak to, what questions we elect to ask, which facts we include and which we leave out, and how we choose to prioritize those facts. Our understanding of conflict will also influence our choice of images, video, and sound and even the words we choose to use. If we think of conflicts as problems that are shared by groups involved and that need to be jointly addressed, this will help us to report constructively on conflict.

b. Avoid labeling conflicts

We will always grapple with the challenge of balancing the need to explain the complexity of conflicts with the limitations of space and airtime. The problem we face is that in trying to explain conflicts to audiences who know little about them, we often run the risk of oversimplifying the narrative. Journalists often use simple labels to capture these issues based on who is involved or what it is that the parties seem to be fighting over. Terms such as ethnic conflict, religious conflict, and tribal conflict are frequently used to describe conflict between groups; similarly terms such as land conflict and power struggles are used to describe conflicts based on causes. Unfortunately, using such labels to explain conflicts can distort and de-contextualize accounts of conflicts. Labels often focus on just one aspect of the conflict and neglect the fact that most conflicts are the result of a range of different

Labels often focus on just one aspect of the conflict and neglect the fact that most conflicts are the result of a range of different conditions and dynamics. Using a label like 'Christian-Muslim conflict', or 'religious war' creates the impression that conflict between faiths is inevitable.

68 Ibid.

conditions and dynamics. Using a label like 'Christian-Muslim conflict', or 'religious war' creates the impression that conflict between faiths is inevitable.

c. Provide inclusive coverage to ensure broad representation

It is common in conflicts for people to focus on the elite voices and to give political, religious, and military leaders a more prominent platform. But it is also vital for us to ask the question, "Whose voices are not being heard?" We need to identify categories of people affected by the conflict and to identify men and women who are representative of these groups and who can provide insights into the causes of conflicts and the impact of violence on their lives. These groups can include internally displaced people and refugees, people whose family members are missing, wounded or dead, those living in fear of future attacks and people whose business, schooling, and farming activities have been disrupted. Lynch and McGoldrick suggest that we should be asking:

- How people on the ground are affected by the conflict?
- What do they want changed?
- Who else is speaking up for them besides their political leaders?
- Whether the positions stated by their leaders are the only way to achieve the changes that they want?⁶⁹

When we speak to people on the ground we want to do more than just ask how the conflict has affected them. We also want to find out what they feel has led to conflict and violence and what they believe needs to happen for a conflict to be transformed. It is not uncommon for people at the grassroots level to have more in common with each other than they have in common with elites in their own groups. We may be able to mitigate conflict by reporting on these shared interests, thereby helping people to recognize that they share a common humanity and that everyone is suffering. We can also help to promote vertical communication within groups by enabling people to share their needs, concerns, and constructive ideas with their leaders.

d. Expose hate speech

During times of conflict the use of hate messages deliberately intended to provoke violent attacks by one group on another can be a powerful warning that a conflict could turn violent and that a group may be planning to commit atrocities. It is critical for us to report on incidents of hate speech and to raise awareness about the fact that people are using these means to provoke violence.

How do we manage situations where one group threatens another, calls on members to exterminate opponents, or uses extreme language to provoke conflict with another group? There is no universally-accepted definition of hate speech and countries vary considerably in terms of their tolerance levels for language that could incite violence.⁷⁰ However, at least two areas of international law include specific provisions against such practices. Article 20 of the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)⁷¹ is clear that:

⁶⁹ Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005: 29.

⁷⁰ A discussion document by the NGO Article 19 presents a number of conditions agreed to by the UN, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Organization of American States that national hate speech laws should respect, namely: "1. No one should be penalized for statements that are true, 2. No one should be penalized for the dissemination of hate speech unless it has been shown that they did so with the intention of inciting discrimination, hostility or violence, 3. The right of a journalist to decide how best to communicate information and ideas to the public should be respected, particularly when they are reporting on racism and intolerance, 4. No one should be subject to prior censorship, 5. Any imposition of sanctions by courts should be in strict conformity with the principle of proportionality." Available: <http://www.article19.org/pages/en/hate-speech-more.html>

⁷¹ United Nations Human Rights 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Available: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

- Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
- Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

While Article 4 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination⁷² stipulates that states:

(a) Shall declare an offence punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin, and also the provision of any assistance to racist activities, including the financing thereof;

(b) Shall declare illegal and prohibit organizations, and also organized and all other propaganda activities, which promote and incite racial discrimination, and shall recognize participation in such organizations or activities as an offence punishable by law;

(c) Shall not permit public authorities or public institutions, national or local, to promote or incite racial discrimination.

As journalists we are also guided by the ethical principle of minimizing harm and we will want to avoid repeating statements that promote hatred and discrimination. We are not obligated to provide a platform for messages that provoke hatred, but we cannot simply ignore cases where influential people deliver highly inflammatory messages in public. When possible we will want to challenge leaders to explain and justify the use of language that could provoke violence. Or we can report on the fact that inflammatory remarks were made without repeating the actual words. We can also approach other parties, observers, authorities, and representatives of regional and international organizations to react to the fact that such remarks have been made and canvass the views of these people about whether the remarks amount to hate speech or not. **RR 4** provides a guideline we can use when considering whether we are dealing with hate speech or not.

RR 4: ETHICAL JOURNALISM NETWORK.

Hate-speech: A Five Point-Point Test for Journalists. Produced by an advisory group to the Ethical Journalism Network, this text offers guidelines we can consider when making ethical decisions about how to work with inflammatory remarks made by people both inside and outside the context of conflict.

<http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/en/contents/hate-speech-a-five-point-test-for-journalists>

e. Enhance the quality of communication through in-depth interviewing

There is a tendency to think of the interview as a means of gathering information. It is much more than that. Good interviewing involves finding out how people really feel about and understand issues, and enabling people to communicate the messages they want to convey as precisely as possible. The following tips for conflict sensitive interviewing were jointly developed by six southern African reporters with experience of covering conflict.⁷³

- Avoid phrasing questions in terms of winners and losers. When asking questions about goals, objectives, and strategies, encourage parties to move away from 'zero-sum' game ideas. How we phrase a question will have an impact on how people respond. Asking, "What will it take to satisfy

⁷² United Nations Human Rights. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Available: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>

⁷³ Du Toit, P. 2010.

you?” is a very different question to “What will it take for this conflict to be resolved in a way that satisfies everyone?” The first begs a zero-sum response while the latter asks people to think more broadly. Both are fair questions, but the second is more likely to encourage a constructive response.

- Encourage interviewees to consider the other parties involved. Instead of just asking parties to outline their needs and interests — we should be trying to get beyond positions — we should also be asking them how they understand the needs and interests of others involved in the conflict.
- We do not want to censor interviewees, but we also do not want to be manipulated by people wanting to use our channels to provoke conflict. We can follow up on insulting and provocative statements by asking how they anticipate their rivals will respond to these statements. We can also ask what they aim to achieve by making such statements.
- Be firm. Being conflict sensitive does not prevent us from being tough on interviewees who are being evasive. If an interviewee makes false or exaggerated statements, we need to challenge them on these claims. Similarly, if they make demands or promises that seem unrealistic we need to question how and why people think these are feasible.
- Listen carefully and paraphrase people’s responses back to them. We cannot afford to misrepresent what people have to say. Lives could depend on our getting a quote right. By reflecting people’s statements back to them we can also help them to hear how they may be coming across. A person may say something very provocative during an interview because they are speaking out of anger, but they may choose to tone down this statement when they realize how they may be interpreted. It is important to ensure that what we say in our reports does not just reflect what they said, but also what they really wanted to communicate.
- Do not put words into people’s mouths. Avoid questions that begin with: “Would you say...?” Rather, ask open questions that let people describe or remark on issues in their own words.
- Adopt a tone that suggests even-handedness. Do not pretend to be a sympathizer, but do make it clear that you are interested in what everyone has to say.
- We often have to speak to people whose views and ideologies we find incomprehensible, objectionable, or offensive. We need to prepare ourselves mentally for these interviews and to be aware of how our feelings might influence us.
- Be aware that unless you are willing to give the interviewee an opportunity to be heard, you will not be able to contribute constructively to mitigating the conflict.

6.3 Reporting constructively when violence has broken out and atrocities are being perpetrated

a. Treat all information with extreme caution

Information can be very fluid and hard to come by during times of extreme conflict. Parties anxious to use the media to win the support of sympathetic stakeholders are likely to bury, stretch, or completely reverse the truth to get positive and sympathetic coverage. We need to treat all claims with caution. People will often try to feed us false information with the deliberate goal of provoking further conflict, concealing what they have done, or shifting the blame to someone else. We will sometimes get reports of attacks and atrocities having taken place from sources we do not know; we need to be especially careful with these claims until they have been verified by sources that we trust. Even when we have confirmation from sources we trust, we still want to establish how they know what they know. These are some questions we will want to ask:

- Did our sources witness what happened? How much were they actually able to observe?
- Have our sources been to the scene? Did they witness what happened, or are they providing a second hand account?

In some conflicts, particularly where atrocities are being committed, we will want to be cautious about unwittingly giving perpetrators information about safe havens and hiding places where they may seek out victims. We may not want to reveal information about places of refuge unless we know these places are protected.

- Can they verify their claims?
- Do our different sources' accounts support or contradict each other?

There may be times when we are satisfied that information we have received about a violent action or an atrocity is accurate, yet we still do not know enough to give a full account. If we are convinced the story does not hold, then we need to be careful about making specific claims. One option is to let the audience know that a story is emerging, but that we have not been able to verify all the facts and that we will keep people updated as more information emerges. This is particularly important for broadcast and on-line media which can be expected to provide regular updates. We also need to make it clear who the source of the information was in terms of political positioning, expertise, and proximity to the event.

b. Provide information people can use to find safety and protection

We can help non-combatants find places of refuge and to move more safely through conflict zones by providing people with information about where fighting is taking place, where fighters are located, and where atrocities are being committed. However, conflict areas change very rapidly and we need to be continually updating our information. If we cannot get updates from an area, then we should let people know when we were last able to update our information about what is taking place in a particular area. In some conflicts, particularly where atrocities are being committed, we will want to be cautious about unwittingly giving perpetrators information about safe havens and hiding places where they may seek out victims. We may not want to reveal information about places of refuge unless we know these places are protected.

c. When you cannot be balanced, be honest about your constraints

We have observed that journalists can often have unparalleled access to parties, but this is not always the case when a conflict turns violent. We can often only reach one side, as others may be on the run, in hiding, or operating from areas that are simply too dangerous to visit. We may also face threats from the state or other belligerents if we talk to people from a particular side. In these situations we need to be honest with our audiences about the limitations we face and why we cannot provide inclusive coverage; in doing so, we alert our audiences that we are not able provide a comprehensive picture. We may also struggle to be inclusive when parties have repeatedly refused to provide requested comments or do not reply to multiple requests. In these cases we must make it clear to our audience that we have given the group a fair opportunity to respond, which is both an ethical and a legal strategy for professional journalists.

d. Provide information that helps aid agencies identify areas of need

If we can provide accurate, up-to-date, and reliable information, our journalism can support the work of people intervening to prevent violence and atrocities. Media reports can also be important sources of information for humanitarian agencies wanting to provide aid to people. Which areas or villages have been attacked? How many people have been injured and killed? Are people in need of food and medical supplies? What infrastructure has been destroyed and what remains? What kinds of weapons have been used in the attacks? Are the areas where attacks have taken place still occupied or have the attackers moved on? We can only really gather this information by spending time talking to people affected by conflict about the kinds of assistance they need. In working with communities we want to be clear that we cannot guarantee anything—people must know that we can draw attention to their situations, but that it will be up to others to respond.

e. Monitor social media for information on how a conflict is developing

In countries where internet and smartphone penetration is high, social media platforms provide a critical source of information about events that are unfolding, how people are experiencing these events, where attacks and atrocities are taking place, and who is involved. As with all social media, we want to treat these sources with caution. There is always the possibility that people may be manipulating information for their own good, that they have heard exaggerated stories, or that they have

incorrectly interpreted what has happened or is happening. It is vital to be aware that photographs and video released online can be faked by parties to provoke further conflict or to win over national and international sympathies. Craig Silverman's Verification Handbook (**See RR5**) provides valuable tips on how to avoid being manipulated.

RR 5: VERIFYING ONLINE CONTENT

The European Journalism Center. *Verification Handbook: An ultimate guideline on digital age sourcing for emergency coverage.* Edited by Craig Silverman of the Poynter Institute, this text provides strategies from a range of experts on verifying online content. It demonstrates how easily online information can be faked and provides a wealth of useful tips we can use for assessing whether the information is authentic. This handbook should be must-read for all journalists. It is freely available for downloading at: <http://verificationhandbook.com/downloads/verification.handbook.pdf>

Storyful.blog. *Storyful's validation process.* This blog, by the online news agency and verification company Storyful, provides useful insights and some steps we can take to verify videos and photographs posted online. Available at: <http://blog.storyful.com/2012/04/24/inside-storyful-storyfuls-verification-process/#.U5Fy2pS1b-s>

f. Use social media to get accurate information to communities

Social media networks also provide us with powerful tools for sharing accurate and credible information. If we are able to release a steady stream of accurate and reliable information, we can become a trusted reference for thousands if not millions of people. In doing so we can win long-term support for our media organizations, but more importantly we can provide an alternative to propaganda and the rumors that spark fear and which can promote further violence. We need to be continuously updating our stories and websites as soon as we get new information and putting out links to these on relevant and popular social media networks. We can also direct people to other sites of information that we know to be reliable. In addition, we may also want to warn people against the dangers of responding to unconfirmed rumors on social media. This can include pointing out when photographs, video, and "news stories" have been faked. Information about such fakes can sometimes be obtained from fact checking websites such as StopFake, an organization dedicated to verifying information on social media and to combating misinformation.⁷⁴ We can follow-up on these stories by asking both governments and humanitarian agencies how they are planning to respond to the needs expressed by people affected by violence.⁷⁵

g. Challenge assumptions that groups are internally united in supporting violence

Highly escalated conflict does polarize contending groups and enhances cohesion within them, but it is important to resist the assumption that group members are unified when it comes to the use of violence and the perpetration of atrocities. In many conflicts involving violence and atrocities, there are examples of people who have risked their own lives to protect others from the actions of their own groups. We want to avoid painting everyone with the same brush. While the most radical elements within groups are likely to be the most visible, it is important for us to look beyond them to assess whether there are others in the group who support non-violent or more conciliatory means of managing and transforming conflicts. Then we need to find ways of telling their stories and letting them share their views.

⁷⁴ See the Neiman Journalism Lab article by Lydia Tomkiw, A Ukrainian fact-checking site is trying to spot fake photos in social media — and building audience. <http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/06/a-ukrainian-factchecking-site-is-trying-to-spot-fake-photos-in-social-media-and-building-audience/>

⁷⁵ Internews' Responding on Humanitarian Crises: A Manual for Trainers and Journalists and an Introduction for Humanitarian Workers provide a useful reference to agencies that provide humanitarian assistance. Available: https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/IN140220_HumanitarianReportingHANDOUTS_WEB.pdf

h. Question how violence impacts women during armed conflicts

The general narrative of armed conflicts depicts men in conflict with men, often in heroic battles for supremacy or in the defense of honor and dignity. When women do feature in conflict narratives, it is often as helpless victims or as grieving mothers and widows. Too often the roles women play are ignored or massively overshadowed by coverage of combat.⁷⁶ If we are to provide a comprehensive picture of how conflicts impact society or how they might be resolved, we also need to focus on how people are surviving behind the scenes. How are they managing to prepare food, take care of children, care for the ill and the wounded, and to cope with the daily challenge of survival? Reports covering these issues are often treated as “soft news” and marginalized, but it is often in these spaces away from the frontlines that we can find the greatest suffering, the true costs of conflict, and the most poignant stories of courage. Women’s experiences of war and armed conflict are too frequently ignored and yet, together with children, they make up the vast majority of fatalities during armed conflicts.⁷⁷

RR 6: GENDER AND CONFLICT REPORTING

Both of these texts provide valuable guidance for journalists by bringing together the concepts of conflict sensitive reporting with gender sensitive reporting. Lloyd and Howard’s handbook demonstrates clearly that reporting cannot be truly conflict sensitive if it does not seek to ensure that men and women are fairly represented in our conflict coverage. The approaches are inseparable.

Lina Sagaral Reyes & Rajeli Nicole. 2007. *Engendering Peace Journalism Keeping Community Whole — A Guide on Gender Sensitive Peace and Conflict Reportage*. Isis International and Min-WoW. Available: http://www.isisinternational.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=163&Itemid=344

Fiona Lloyd & Ross Howard. 2005. *Gender, Conflict and Journalism: A handbook for South Asia*. Kathmandu: UNESCO and Nepal Press Institute. Available: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001439/143925e.pdf>

The focus on combat during armed conflicts can obscure other forms of violence which have a particular impact on women. The use of sexual violence, including rape, as a tactic of war has been recognized by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1820 as a crime against humanity and, under certain circumstances, as a “constitutive act with respect to genocide.”⁷⁸ This resolution highlights the importance of recognizing sexual violence as a conflict strategy and demands that these acts should not be accepted as an inevitable consequence of armed conflict. When covering violent conflict, we want to ensure stories dealing with the systematic use of rape and sexual violence are given prominence and brought to the attention of our audiences and, where possible, the international community. It is notable that the Security Council’s resolution “demands” that parties take steps to protect civilians from all forms of sexual violence and that military leaders take steps to enforce “the prohibition of all forms of sexual violence against civilians” among their soldiers.⁷⁹ The resolution also “stresses” that in the wake of conflicts, crimes involving sexual violence should be excluded from amnesty provisions built into reconciliation processes.⁸⁰ These are points worth raising and reiterating when we write about the use of sexual violence in conflict.

76 These points are beautifully expressed in Jasmin Nicoloci’s blog YouTube, *Masculine Representations*, and the War in Syria, 5 December 2013. Available: <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/jasminesthoughts/>

77 Rehn, E., & Johnson Sirleaf, E. 2002. *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peacebuilding: Progress of the World’s Women 2002*, vol.2. New York: UNIFEM.

78 United Nations Security Council. 2008. Resolution 1820 [2008]. Adopted on 19 June 2008. Available: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820%282008%29

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

We also need to note that the level of domestic violence tends to increase significantly during war-time and in post-conflict periods and this is an issue we need to monitor as conflicts unfold.⁸¹ By speaking to social workers, religious leaders, women's groups, and medical practitioners, we can find out if there has been an increase in domestic violence and draw attention to these problems. We can also enable people with expertise in this area to provide advice to families and information about the different options available for women needing protection. In their handbook *Gender, Conflict and Journalism* (see RR 6), Fiona Lloyd and Ross Howard provide valuable advice on how we can tell some of the untold stories regarding the roles women play during times of armed conflict and how these conflicts impact them.

i. Avoid sensationalist language

We do not need to be sensationalist or judgmental in describing violence and atrocities. It is better to describe what we see in detail without the intention of provoking by emphasizing too much gruesome detail. We want to avoid exaggeration by using neutral language that lets audiences understand what has happened and the extent of the brutality involved, but we do not need to be overly explicit in our descriptions. We may want to drive home the horror of an atrocity, but we must be aware that gruesome descriptions and images can be too much for audiences to confront. People will often turn the page, change the channel, or shut down a web-page if descriptions and images are too difficult to bear. It is also important to respect the victims of violence and their families. We do not want to further traumatize people who are already suffering. To say someone was burned to death inside a building is already bad enough, but we do not need to describe the charred remains of a body for people to understand what has happened.

j. Avoid victimizing language

Lynch and McGoldrick suggest that when talking to people who have been affected by violence we should avoid using words like "'devastated', 'defenseless', 'pathetic', or 'tragedy', which only tell us what has been done to and could be done for a group of people by others."⁸² They suggest that treating people only as victims is disempowering and suggest that they have limited options. They recommend that we should rather report "what has been done and could be done by the people." We should also ask questions about what they are doing and what they think should be done to improve their situation, particularly by responsible authorities if they exist. We can also encourage people to contribute to deliberations about solutions to conflicts by asking people to describe the kinds of solutions they envisage.

k. Consider the impact of images

We face very difficult decisions when it comes to the choice of images and video we use when reporting on violent conflict. Do we show our audiences graphic images of violence, suffering, and death? Will shocking images help to drive home the horror of armed conflict and encourage people to take steps to end violence, or will they provoke more anger and exacerbate violence? They may do both. We cannot conceal what is happening, but at the same time we want to be aware of the impact of our work. The BBC's editorial guidelines on *war, terror and emergencies* state:

We should respect human dignity without sanitizing the realities of war. There must be a clear editorial justification for the use of very graphic pictures of war and atrocity.⁸³

Central to this guidance is the importance of careful consideration when deciding on which images to use and how to use them. Drama and audience appeal are not adequate motivations for using

81 Feminist media coverage of women in war: 'You are our eyes and ears to the world. In *Gender & Development*, 15(3), 435-450.

82 Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005: 29

83 In Rughani, P. 2010. Are you a vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of atrocity coverage and its aftermath. In Keeble, R., Tolloch, J., & Zollman, F. *Peace journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. New York: Peter Lang.

pictures that could provoke violence in a highly-charged atmosphere. We need to consider what an image is saying about a conflict and what its impact might be. We also want to ask whether there are other images we could use that would help people to understand the conflict without the same negative effects.

In addition, how we caption or script around images is always very important. We need to ensure our audiences are clear about the context. For instance, does the subject matter represent the impact of a one-sided attack on civilians by a major power, or does it show the impact on civilians of an ongoing civil war between rival groups?

Further, we also want to be conscious of the needs of our subjects, those people who are photographed and their families. In this regard, the BBC guidelines state that journalists need to:

...balance the public interest in full and accurate reporting against the need to be compassionate and to avoid any unjustified infringement on privacy. It is rarely justified to broadcast scenes in which people are dying. It is always important to respect the privacy and dignity of the dead. We should avoid the gratuitous use of close ups of faces and serious injuries or other violent material.⁸⁴

Documentary filmmaker and photographer Pratap Rughani poses a range of questions that can help us think through what we are doing when we film and photograph violent conflicts. He suggests that journalists should ask themselves:

- Am I clear enough about my own intentions and motives and the motives of those who may seek to be featured? What do victims of atrocity want others to know?
- What impact might involvement with the project have on the subjects featured?
- Can the representation and framing of subjects help subjects recover their dignity?
- How aware am I of the sensitivities of subjects and audience?
- What are my instincts telling me?
- Is there a way to do more than trade in misery and inhumanity? Are there even moments of renewal and empowerment?⁸⁵

Within this checklist for individual journalists, it is possible to discern an underlying theme that photographs of conflict do not need to be limited to images of warriors and victims. We also want to show images of ordinary people taking action to improve their situations. We also need pictures that enable parties in conflict to recognize their common humanity.

I. Interviewing people affected by conflict

One of the most difficult but often the most important challenges we face when covering conflicts is to interview the survivors of armed and violent conflict. These people can include refugees and IDPs who have lost everything, parents and children whose loved ones have died or been killed, and the victims of sexual violence, rape, and torture. They will all have important stories to tell that can help us to show how a conflict has impacted communities, but they may often struggle to tell these stories. Gavin Rees writes that:

84 Ibid.

85 Rughani, P. 2010. Are you a vulture? Reflecting on ethics and aesthetics of atrocity coverage and its aftermath. In Keeble, R., Tolloch, J. and Zollmann. *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. New York: Peter Lang.

Survivors often have great difficulty themselves in making sense of what happened to them and bad interviewing techniques can significantly undermine their attempts to gain some control back over their situation through their own understanding of it.⁸⁶

He suggests further that:

Skilled journalists, who have learnt how to listen without passing judgment and who understand how to help structure a victim's narrative are likely to augment an interviewee's sense of security. They are also more likely to get better information and material that is more quotable.⁸⁷

RR 7: INTERVIEWING SURVIVORS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Fiona Lloyd & Ross Howard provide valuable insights into how to caringly manage the process of setting up and organizing interviews with trauma survivors. See Lloyd, F. and Howard, R. 2005. *Gender, Conflict and Journalism: A handbook for South Asia*. Kathmandu: UNESCO and Nepal Press Institute. Available: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001439/143925e.pdf>

Internews' Speak Up, Speak Out: Toolkit for Reporting on Human Rights Issues provides specific guidance for speaking to rape and torture victims. Available: http://cdn.journalism.cuny.edu/blogs.dir/475/files/2012/09/Internews_SpeakUpSpeakOut_Full.pdf

The **Search for Common Ground- Radio for Peacebuilding Africa** *Covering Trauma: a training guide* by Jina Moore poses some important questions about trauma reporting and offers useful advice on interviewing. Available at: http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/rfpa/pdf/2011-Covering_Trauma_Color_EN.pdf

The following suggestions for interviewing the victims of trauma were made by the same group of Southern African journalists we cited in 6.2e. (For further guidance on interviewing survivors, **see RR7**.)

- Do not assume to understand what someone who has experienced an atrocity is going through. Take the interview slowly and let the person tell his or her own story.
- There is no harm in showing that you care, but this does not mean you should show sympathy for a particular group.
- Let people open up slowly and respect the fact that people may have experienced and seen things you may not even be able to imagine.
- Begin the interview gently and do what you can to make the person feel comfortable before you start asking the more difficult questions.
- Let the person know that they are in control of the interview. They can decide on how much or how little they want to tell you.
- Asking probing questions may yield important information, but be sensitive to the interviewee's emotional needs.
- Do not feel the need to fill the silences. Sometimes it can help to be quiet for a moment and give people the chance to think and to collect themselves if they are feeling emotional.

86 Rees, G. 2013. The trauma factor. In Fowler-Watt, K., & Allan, S. *Journalism: New Challenges*. Centre for Journalism & Communication Research, Bournemouth University, 422.

87 Ibid.

- Asking open-ended questions encourages people to tell their stories in their own words. Closed-ended questions leading to “Yes” and “No” answers tend to foreground the journalist’s thinking instead of the interviewee’s explanations.
- It is often better to conduct one-on-one interviews with people who have experienced trauma, but this is not always the case. There may be times when a source will feel more comfortable if they have others there to support them. We need to make allowances for these requests to make interviewees feel as comfortable as possible.
- Be aware that when conducting group interviews, the unexpected might happen. Interviews conducted in group situations can become challenging if people disagree with each other and begin to argue among themselves.
- Be sure that people understand how what they have said is likely to be used and whether or not he or she will be identified in the story.
- Be sure you understand what the source is saying. It is often useful to end the interview by highlighting the points that you think you will use in your story, and checking with the source whether your understanding is accurate or whether the source feels you are missing anything important.
- Be emotionally prepared. We tend to get hardened over time, but there will often be cases where something about an interview or an interviewee touches us deeply. We need to be alert to that possibility and to think about how we will respond when this happens.
- Never make promises you cannot guarantee. The best we can generally do is to promise to try to tell the person’s story accurately and with respect so that others can understand what they have been through and what they need. We cannot promise that our stories will bring about change or international aid. Most of us cannot even guarantee our media houses will use the stories; it can be worth explaining that this decision rests with the editor.

6.4 Reporting constructively on peace processes

The critical contribution that journalists can make in helping communities deal constructively with conflict are by no means diminished once parties start taking steps toward resolving and transforming conflicts. All of the roles we mentioned in Part Five remain equally critical as parties move toward finding and implementing mutually satisfactory agreements. The following are some ways in which we can contribute.

a. Monitoring peace negotiations

Even in situations where the perpetrators of atrocities are defeated, there will often be some form of negotiation process aimed at securing a peaceful future and accommodating the needs of contending parties. We will want to track these processes carefully and the following are some dynamics we should keep in mind.⁸⁸

- Just because people are participating in negotiations does not mean they are genuinely looking for solutions. Parties have previously entered into negotiations simply to give themselves time to regroup and to prepare for more fighting. It is important that while we focus on what is happening at the negotiation table, we also keep a very careful eye on what other activities the parties are engaged in.
- As negotiations continue and parties make public the progress that has been made we need to communicate this to people outside of the negotiations. We also want to get people’s reactions to these developments and to give them a chance to have input in the process through the media.

88 Du Toit, 2012: 55

- We need to be aware that negotiations can be extremely sensitive and that there are times when parties cannot afford to let the general public know what is happening until they have formally reached agreements. There have been cases when journalists have published information received from inside sources and these reports, published and broadcast at sensitive moments, have damaged the negotiation process. It can be worth checking with principal negotiators and the mediators before publishing leaked information.
- It is worth identifying people who have been left out of the negotiation process and asking them “What happens next?” By speaking to these people, we can let groups involved in negotiations recognize the danger of excluding people and how this can lead to grievances and future conflicts breaking out.
- We also want to recognize that peace-making takes time. People often grow impatient as negotiations continue and we need to help people to understand that good agreements cannot be rushed. It can be useful to interview mediators and conflict experts, as well as veterans of past negotiations, who can explain to our audiences how peace processes usually work, and why patience is often required.

b. Assessing agreements

Johan Galtung suggests that one important role that journalists can play in reporting on conflict is to “ask the difficult questions” and to point out the weaknesses when groups make peace proposals. He suggests that there are a number of questions we should consider asking that can shed light on potential problems. These include:

- What was the method behind the plan? Were all parties involved in the dialogue?
- Is the plan acceptable to all parties? If not, what can be done about it?
- Is the plan, if realized, sustainable? If not, what can be done about it?
- Is the plan based on autonomous action by the conflicting parties, or does it depend on outsiders?
- To what extent is there a process in the plan? Does it spell out who shall do what, when, how, and where?
- To what extent is the plan based on what only the elites can do?
- Does the plan foresee an ongoing conflict-resolution process or a single-shot agreement? Why?
- If there has been violence, to what extent does the plan contain elements of rehabilitation/reconstruction, reconciliation, and justice?
- If the plan does not work, is it reversible?
- Even if the plan does work for this conflict, does it create new conflicts or problems?
- Is it a good deal for all involved?

By asking these questions and publicizing responses we can help people to see potential problems and to begin addressing them. This can help forestall later complications when groups find they are not satisfied with agreements or how they were achieved. It can be beneficial for us to bring in people with conflict expertise as commentators and to draw on their perspectives in broadening the public debate.

c. Monitoring whether or not women are involved in the peace processes

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) represents, among other things, a commitment by the international community to ensure that women are involved in peace processes and in the implementation of peace agreements. The resolution also spells out specific obligations for the UN, civil society, governments, the police, and the judiciary as to how they should “ensure the participation of women in peace processes and improve the protection of women and girls in areas affected by

Publishing these accounts can help others to understand what people have experienced and prepare audiences to be more empathetic.

conflict”⁸⁹ What follows are a range of proposals presented in *Engendering Peace Journalism: Keeping Communities Whole*⁹⁰ that suggests how media can monitor the extent to which the resolution is being implemented.

- Ask for interviews with all parties to the conflict on the implementation of UNSCR 1325.
- Consult local women’s organizations about their UNSCR 1325 monitoring processes and related demands.
- In peace or ceasefire negotiations, ask for the women’s representation on negotiation panels, referring to UNSCR 1325. In the case that no women are represented on the negotiation panels of the different parties, ask local women’s organizations what they intend to do about this violation of UNSCR 1325.
- If national or international armed forces and/or peacekeeping forces are being deployed to a conflict area, ask them if they received any gender training on women’s rights and UNSCR 1325.
- Ask the authorities of refugee camps and relocation sites how they address women’s needs and rights as guaranteed by UNSCR 1325.
- If a peace agreement has been reached, ask how UNSCR 1325 is reflected in the agreement and how much money is allotted toward its implementation.
- In post-conflict reconstruction, ask local government, peacekeeping forces, and national and international relief organizations if they trained their personnel to respect women’s rights and UNSCR 1325. Also ask how they will meet women’s needs and guarantee their full participation in post-conflict reconstruction as called for by UNSCR 1325.

d. Explore how the atrocities happened in greater depth

With the passage of time, journalists are likely to be able to explore an atrocity further and to pose a wide range of different questions that might help people to understand and, at least to some degree, come to terms with what happened. Questions we might want to answer could include the following:

- What were the motives behind the event? Was it a spontaneous eruption or an orchestrated strategic attack? If the latter then what were the objectives of the orchestrators?
- Who was actually responsible for orchestrating the attack? Why did others agree to do their bidding?
- What were the contextual factors that made it possible for perpetrators to do what they did?
- Is it possible to trace how people’s thinking developed to the point where they were able to commit atrocities against each other? (This would require in-depth interviewing with people involved in atrocities which will often not be possible.)
- Is it possible to get perpetrators to explain their actions? How do they justify what they have done? Are there ways in which they would like to make amends?
- How do the survivors understand the motives of the attackers?
- What do people think needs to happen if a society or a community is to find a way of moving beyond the atrocity?

89 SAATHI. Facts about United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Available: http://www.saathi.org.np/images/stories/pdf/media_kit_english.pdf

90 Lina Sagaral Reyes & Rajjeli Nicole. 2007. *Engendering Peace Journalism Keeping Community Whole — A Guide on Gender Sensitive Peace and Conflict Reportage*. Isis International and Min-WoW. Available: http://www.isisinternational.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=163&Itemid=344

The fact is that many of those directly involved in the perpetration of atrocities are often victims in their own right. They may be child soldiers abducted when they were still very young. Their commanders may be no different. In many instances perpetrators are also ordinary individuals who, given the extraordinary circumstances, decided to commit violence. These can include people who were forced to obey orders and people who are sometimes unable to explain what they have done afterwards. We are not psychologists, but the process of talking these issues through with people and with members of affected communities has the potential to contribute toward healing. Publishing these accounts can help others to understand what people have experienced and prepare audiences to be more empathetic.

e. Provide in-depth and extensive reporting on reconciliation processes

When periods of intense conflict are followed by reconciliation processes it is vital for these events to get substantial coverage. For instance, live broadcasts of the stories of perpetrators and victims provided at reconciliation forums can promote understanding and help people recognize the other person's point of view and experience. They can also make it possible for a society to jointly acknowledge the past and to collectively explore a better future. Some people's testimony may be more dramatic than others, but it is important that a representative sample of all those affected be published and broadcast. If our format or space limitations make extended coverage difficult, we should look at creating edited packages or writing long features that capture the essence of these stories. We can also explore making full testimony available online.

PART SEVEN: Taking care of ourselves

Some journalists make it their life's work to track conflagrations across the globe. They play an essential role in bringing the news of horrific events to the eyes and ears of the international community. Generally representing large, well-resourced organizations, these journalists are often trained to survive in hostile environments, equipped with body armor and hi-tech communication tools and have access to counselling and psychological support. They also face tremendous pressure to get close to the action. Others — including many domestic journalists working for local print, broadcast, and on-line media organizations — have no desire to travel to war zones and cover armed conflicts. They see themselves as having different, but no less important, contributions to make. Sometimes, however, these journalists find the war zone has come to them and they must cover these events without the benefit of experience, training, or hi-tech equipment.

This was the experience of Kenyan journalists who found themselves reporting on the widespread violence that followed the disputed presidential elections in December 2007. More than 1,000 people were killed and an estimated 600,000 people were displaced in the fighting that often took on an ethnic dimension. Journalists were aware of tensions prior to the elections, but the extent of the violence caught many by surprise and journalists found themselves risking their lives and witnessing horrific events as they reported on the violence. Similarly, journalists in Africa's newest state found themselves in the middle of a civil war when fighting erupted between members of South Sudan's Presidential Guard on December 15, 2013. The confrontation escalated rapidly as forces loyal to the president and others loyal to his former deputy waged war across large parts of the country. The fighting, which was still ongoing in mid-2014, saw thousands of civilian and military casualties and many hundreds of thousands of people displaced.

Few of these Kenyan and Sudanese journalists had the experience or the training needed to prepare them for the danger and the trauma they faced in covering these conflicts, but this did not deter them from going out into the field and bringing back important stories. Other journalists will doubtless face similar challenges in the future. This section provides some tips to help reporters cope with physical danger and emotional stress. The toolbox also recommends a range of other more comprehensive resources that are freely available to journalists online.

7.1 Putting safety first

The first decision journalists must take when it comes to reporting on armed conflict and atrocities is whether they are willing and able to go into areas where their lives may be in danger. This must be an individual decision. Principle II of the Reporters without Borders' Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Areas states that:

Covering wars involves an acceptance by media workers of the risks attached and also a personal commitment which means they go on a strictly voluntary basis. Because of the risks, they should have the right to refuse such assignments without explanation and without there being any finding of unprofessional conduct. In the field, the assignment can be terminated at the request of the reporter or the editors after each side has consulted the other and taken

into account their mutual responsibilities. Editors should beware of exerting any kind of pressure on special correspondents to take additional risks.⁹¹

The reality is that journalists who feel unable to cope with the danger and brutality of working in combat situations are unlikely to be able to perform at their best and may find themselves incapacitated by fear. For editors, it is essential to recognize that the best person to evaluate the situation and his or her ability to cope is the journalist.⁹² For journalists working in combat zones, the following tips will provide some guidance for keeping safe:

- **If you are in or going into a volatile situation, let your news desk know where you are going and when you plan to be back.** Keep the desk updated if you change your plans. Colleagues may be able to organize help for you if you fail to check in at appointed times, but if they do not know where you are, a difficult task can become impossible.
- **Things can move very fast when violence breaks out and you can find that you have moved a long way in a short time.** A calm situation can change rapidly into a more volatile one and when this happens it is advisable to immediately let people know what is happening and where you are.
- **Be conscious of how people are responding to the news media.** In some instances journalists are welcomed — often because people feel authorities may be more restrained if their actions are being monitored. In other situations, people may be very antagonistic. Be very careful if there is an overwhelming sense of negativity toward the media. Carry accreditation with you, but use your judgement about whether to display it or not. Sometimes a “Press” sign on your car may offer some protection, at other times it may make you a target.
- **Find out the names of leaders of parties involved in a situation.** Being able to drop the names of respected leaders can help to ensure that you get out of trouble. If you are threatened by members of one of the conflicting groups, knowing how to contact a respected leader in that group could get you out of a potentially dangerous situation. It helps to have these people’s contacts saved on your mobile. Even the fact that you have their names in your phone directory may enhance your position with junior recruits. It may also be useful to have the contact numbers for police and military officers from units operating in the area where you are working in case you run into trouble with government agencies.
- **Familiarize yourself with the terrain and plan how, if a situation becomes too volatile, you will make your escape.** Try to establish at least one backup escape route in case your first option is blocked. Update your escape options as you move.
- **Be conscious of how the situation and the mood of people around you may be changing.**
- **Stay with other journalists.** Many reporters have recounted how they ran into trouble when they went off on their own. You may not want to stick with the pack, but there is some safety in numbers.
- **Be ready to hit the ground if shooting starts.** Remember cars and the thin walls of shacks and wooden houses offer little or no protection against the guns normally used by combatants. Lying flat in a trench or drainage ditch can be the safest place to be when shooting breaks out. Keeping low will also help protect you from shrapnel.
- **Dress appropriately.** Avoid colours that might be associated with the different parties, politically-themed t-shirts, and clothes that could be mistaken for police and military uniforms. All of these outfits could set you up as a target. Wear shoes that you can run in — running shoes, cross

91 Reporters without Borders. March, 2002. Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Area. Available: <http://www.rsf.org/IMG/doc-1288.pdf>

92 Smyth, F. Journalist Security Guide: Covering the News in a Dangerous and Changing World. Committee to Protect Journalists. Available: <https://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/04/journalist-security-guide.php>

trainers, or light hiking boots are best. Clothes made from natural fibers are both cooler and warmer and less likely to catch fire.

- **Wear protective clothing, bullet-proof vests, and helmets.**⁹³
- **Prepare a card with the following information on it:**
 - Your full name and the organization you work for;
 - Contact numbers people should use if something happens to you;
 - Your blood group;
 - Information about any medicines and drugs you may be allergic to.

This should ideally be laminated and kept in a place where people are likely to find it.

- **Carry basic supplies.** The following are some useful emergency items we should consider carrying with us:
 - Water, water filters, or purification tablets, as well as energy bars;
 - Medication that you might need on a regular basis;
 - A torch, compass, first aid kit, and space blanket;
 - A back-up cell phone, SIM cards from different network providers, and spare batteries.
- **A clear head is your most important survival tool.** Withdraw too early rather than too late. Control your temper at all times and never react violently to verbal or physical provocation.

The one certainty about our profession is the fact that it can be unpredictable. We can never know when we will find ourselves in the middle of volatile situations and it is best to use quieter times to prepare ourselves. The following are some suggestions for things we can do to prepare ourselves in advance for dangerous assignments.

- **Take time to read the different guides provided by journalism support agencies for working in dangerous situations.** There is no substitute for experience, but these handbooks and guides draw on the collective experiences of seasoned journalists and are packed with useful pointers and resources. **See RR8** for some useful examples.
- **Get and stay physically fit.** We never know when we might need to run several kilometers to keep up with a demonstration or to trek long distances to investigate rumors of an atrocity in an isolated village. Keeping fit also enhances our chances of getting out of danger if a situation becomes dangerous and — as will be suggested later — can provide a valuable outlet for stress.
- **Take a course in first aid.** Being caught with a wounded colleague we cannot help because we lack basic knowledge of first aid can be devastating. We may also be able to draw on our knowledge to treat ourselves in an emergency or to guide a colleague who is helping us. Put together a first aid kit you can carry with you in the field.
- **Read other journalists' books about covering conflicts, combat, and atrocities.** We can glean useful tips and suggestions from these books and their stories can help prepare us for the experiences we are likely to have to confront. They may also provide insights about the conflict dynamics we may face.
- **Take time to think about why it is we do what we do.** It can be very empowering to reflect on why we have chosen this life and who we are trying to serve. During the dark moments that inevitably come when we report on violence and atrocities, these ideas can provide us with the strength we need to persevere.

⁹³ It is important to be especially careful if we do not have access to body armor, but even if we do we must recognize that while it may help, body armor cannot offer complete protection.

RR 8: USEFUL GUIDES FOR JOURNALISTS REPORTING ON COMBAT AND TRAUMA

Reporters without Borders. *Handbook for Journalists* — This comprehensive 108-page handbook offers useful chapters covering international protocols protecting journalists in war zones, health precautions, tips for survival in combat areas, first aid, managing stress, and ethics. It also provides useful advice on staying safe if shooting and shelling start. Downloadable from <http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/handbook.pdf>

Committee to Protect Journalists. *Journalist Security Guide: Covering the News in a Dangerous and Changing World* — Written by Frank Smyth, this guide provides advice to foreign and domestic journalists in high risk situations covering combat, natural disasters, epidemics, and civil disturbances. The guide highlights the importance of being prepared, assessing risk and maintaining information security (this chapter written by CPJ Internet Advocacy Coordinator Danny O'Brien). Available at: <https://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/04/journalist-security-guide.php>

Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma — The Dart Center's publications page — available at <http://dartcenter.org/publications> - includes a rich collection of guides for journalists. These include Scharon Schmickle's *Reporting War* which captures the shared insights of a number of experienced war correspondents, and Joe Hight & Frank Smyth's *Tragedies and Journalists* which seeks to help journalists report on "violence while protecting both their sources and themselves."

7.2 Caring for ourselves

Journalists confront trauma on a daily basis. We observe first-hand the horror of natural disasters and man-made catastrophes such as apartment fires, the collapse of badly-built factories, and train wrecks. We witness the agony of deliberate violence committed in domestic abuse, crime, terrorism, atrocities, and combat. Some of us risk our lives in combat zones and many of us are targets of assaults, kidnappings, assassination attempts, and sexual abuse. Just as often our experience of trauma is second-hand. We spend time listening patiently to people who directly experienced trauma and to those — like the families of victims — who are deeply and devastatingly affected. Moreover, civil conflict may inherently be more disturbing to the health of journalists than external conflicts, as the localized nature of the conflicts may mean that journalists personally know combatants, victims, and others, or are identified with the parties by community, ethnicity, race, or religion. Reporting on other peoples' trauma is an important part of what we do, but how often do we consider how our own exposure to trauma touches us, both as journalists and as individuals?

Today there is a growing awareness of the impact of exposure to trauma on journalists and recognition that journalists can often suffer the same mental health problems as soldiers, policemen, and paramedics whose work places them in danger and regularly exposes them to traumatic situations.⁹⁴ This awareness has led to a shift in newsrooms away from the myth of the journalist as an unaffected observer and the recognition that, like the people we report on, we are also at risk of psychological harm.⁹⁵ It is not uncommon for journalists who have experienced or witnessed traumatic events to experience a range of often deeply unsettling reactions. These can include:

- flashbacks and bad dreams;
- feeling inexplicably jittery and irritable;
- being unable to concentrate;
- a sense of numbness and being cut off from the world and loved ones;

⁹⁴ See Castle, P. 1999. Journalism and trauma: Proposals for change. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 7 (13): 143 – 150.

⁹⁵ Many of the world's leading news providers have in-house programs to support journalists who are suffering from trauma-induced stress. These include the BBC, ABC, CNN and Sky-News.

- a craving for solitude;
- avoiding reminders of traumatic experience;
- drinking and smoking more than usual.⁹⁶

These feelings are a natural response to trauma and will normally begin to ease over a period of days or sometimes, in more extreme cases, over weeks.

Many factors determine how severely trauma impacts us. These include the severity of the events, the extent to which our lives have been endangered, and the amount of exposure we have had to trauma. They can also relate to how we take care of our emotional selves. Many journalists who have talked about stress following trauma describe how they have been caught off guard by their own responses. They describe how, after years of witnessing horrific events, they have found themselves suddenly and inexplicably devastated while covering a story that might not normally have affected them so badly. It is also possible that the psychological impact of trauma may only start to affect us some time after the actual event — often triggered by a sound, smell, or image that reminds us of something horrific we may have suppressed. Trauma-induced stress can be debilitating. At work it can mean missing deadlines, filing weak reports, or making bad judgment calls in the field. At home, it can result in relationship breakdowns, outbursts of anger, and a sense of being cut off from partners and children. For a journalist struggling with professional or relationship difficulties, it can be worth questioning whether these may relate to trauma-induced stress.

If, after several weeks, you continue to experience the same unsettling reactions and find these are impacting on your ability to function as usual, it is possible you may be dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). [Helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org) — a website devoted to assisting people coping with stress and emotional problems — says that a normal response to trauma becomes PTSD when you become mentally stuck in the trauma situation. Only a qualified clinician will be able to formally diagnose whether you have PTSD, but if you recognize the symptoms then it is advisable to seek professional help as soon as possible. Director of the Dart Foundation for Journalism and Trauma, Gavin Rees, writes that:

...PTSD is a condition that responds very well to appropriate treatment, a fact that is perhaps not as widely known as it should be...the longer one ignores PTSD, the more likely it is that other complications such as failed work assignments, relationship breakdowns, and alcoholism will start to bite.⁹⁷

For journalists living in areas where counselling services are not easily accessible, the advice offered by Melinda Smith for military veterans recovering from PTSD provides a range of simple and practical strategies that can help people suffering from traumatic stress.⁹⁸ These can be found at <http://www.helpguide.org/mental/veterans-ptsd-recovery.htm>

We can expect that people who have chosen careers as combat reporters will have learned to cope with stress and will have developed a resilience that makes it possible for them to continue doing the work they are doing.⁹⁹ We can have no such expectation of local journalists who unexpectedly find themselves reporting on atrocities in their own countries and communities. For these journalists, the impact of trauma can be extremely harmful. This was evident in the wake of the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya when 150 journalists took advantage of trauma counselling provided by Internation-

⁹⁶ See Rees, G. 2013. The Trauma Factor. In Fowler-Watt, K., & Allan, S. (eds.) Journalism: New Challenges. Centre for Journalism and Communication Research, Bournemouth University.

⁹⁷ Rees, G. 2013.

⁹⁸ Smith, M. PTSD in Veterans. [Helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/veterans-ptsd-recovery.htm). <http://www.helpguide.org/mental/veterans-ptsd-recovery.htm>

⁹⁹ Even so, research has shown that combat reporters fairly frequently suffer from PTSD, with one study estimating that the prevalence of PTSD among these journalists could be over 28 per cent (Rees, 213: 416).

al Media Support.¹⁰⁰ The reality is that nothing but experience can prepare us for the things we might witness when reporting on atrocities, yet even that cumulative experience of covering trauma can add to our levels of stress. We need to monitor both ourselves and our colleagues for signs that stress is getting us down and we should not be in anyway ashamed to look for help when we need it. We also need to be aware that even the process of listening to sources recount their stories of the horrors they may have experienced can result in what is known as 'secondary PTSD', which can also be debilitating.

The following are some simple strategies we can adopt that can help us cope with the stress of reporting on trauma adapted from advice provided by the Dart Foundation for Journalism and Trauma:¹⁰¹

- Know your limits. If you feel you cannot perform an assignment, discuss this with your editor and explain your reasons.
- Take breaks. Giving yourself a few hours away from a traumatic situation can help to relieve stress.
- Talk to someone. Find someone you can trust and who understands what you are going through. Ideally this should be someone whom you know will listen without judging or interrupting.
- Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress. Deep breathing techniques¹⁰² and meditation can help.
- Start and maintain an exercise routine. Walking, running, and cycling are great ways to work off stress. Keeping physically fit helps you cope with stress and will help you in your reporting work. If you are caught in a conflict zone and unable to move freely, basic floor exercises such as sit-ups and push-ups are useful substitutes. Find something you can do that distracts you from thinking about stressful events. Play an instrument, learn to juggle, play Soduku — anything that can hold your attention can help.
- Monitor your alcohol and tobacco consumption and be very careful of taking narcotics.
- Try to get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Share what you are going through with loved ones. You do not need to recount all of the horror stories, but talk to them about your feelings.
- Find moments in the day when you can sit quietly by yourself and reflect. Perhaps listen to music, keep a diary, or write poetry.

100 For a detailed report on this process see IMS. 2008. Healing the Messenger — Post-election Trauma Counseling for Kenyan Journalists. Available at: <http://www.i-m-s.dk/files/publications/1454%20KenyaTrauma.web.pdf>

101 Hight, J. & Smyth, F. 2013. Tragedies & Journalists: A Guide for More Effective Coverage. http://dartcenter.org/files/en_tnj_0.pdf.

102 For a guide to reducing stress through breathing, visit this site from Harvard University. Available at: <http://health.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977016086>

PART EIGHT: Some suggestions for editors

For the most part, this toolbox has focused on the roles that individual journalists can play and strategies they can employ in reporting on conflict featuring violence or atrocities. Part Eight recognizes that local journalists reporting on conflicts in their own communities are likely to be members of teams which can be more effective in covering conflict if they can pool their resources, share information, and work together in providing comprehensive and constructive coverage. The following are some suggestions for editors and news editors who are likely to oversee these teams.

- Develop a shared understanding among your teams about the reporters' role in reporting on conflict. Encourage staff to read materials relating to conflict sensitive reporting and to share these materials with each other. Make time for workshops and meetings in which you explore these issues with your staff and develop a shared vision regarding the kinds of roles that you want to play.
- Invite specialists in issues such as mediation, conflict management and transformation, and international law to hold seminars with your staff so that reporters and editors can deepen their knowledge of these issues and approach their coverage from a more informed position.
- Encourage staff members to build wide-ranging community networks and encourage them to stay in regular contact with these people. Stress the importance of networks including both men and women and people in different social and economic situations.
- Make time for staff to learn to use social networking programs and conflict-mapping platforms. Encourage interested staff members to attend data journalism courses if these are offered in your area.
- Stress the importance of ensuring that conflict stories feature the broader community, not just elites and official spokespeople.
- Ensure that journalists include the voices of both men and women in their reports. Monitor your own organization's coverage and be aware of the extent to which stories published or broadcast on your media are representative. Question whether there are differences in the way in which men and women are portrayed and whether these portrayals will perpetuate existing stereotypes. When appropriate conduct the same monitoring processes looking at ethnicity, race, and religion.
- Stress the importance of using neutral, non-emotive language when reporting on conflict. The credibility of your organization will ultimately depend on the extent to which you have been able to provide fair coverage to all sides.
- Encourage journalists to share information with each other when reporting on conflict.
- Recognize that your staff may be exposed to some very gruesome events in their work and be conscious of the effect such exposure may have on them. Where necessary, arrange for counseling services to be available for your staff. You can also encourage a buddy system where staff are trained to look out for signs of PTSD in their colleagues and to provide support if colleagues are struggling. Collegial support should not be a substitute for professional help when this is necessary.
- Encourage staff not to take unreasonable risks when covering conflict and do not push them to go into situations where they are likely to be in danger. Respect the judgment of people on the ground when it comes to safety and avoid pushing people into situations they feel are unsafe. We may need to insist that enthusiastic reporters take greater care of themselves. This can be particularly true when working with new recruits who lack experience working in violent areas and who are anxious to prove themselves.

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